

PART II

CHAPTER XV

THE world had become six years older. It was contended on many hands that it had also become a little wiser. There remained, however, a few people who still did foolish things. Among them was Mr. Diamond, who had committed a most reprehensible folly in forgetting the existence of his wife and acting on his own initiative. Pondering this in his divided mind, he was slowly wending his way home from a meeting of the Synagogue Committee, of which he was a respected member. It was at this meeting that, in a moment of misguided independence and false enthusiasm, he had allowed himself to be prevailed upon by his colleagues to be nominated as Bridegroom of the Law, because no other candidate could be found.

This Bridegroomship of the Law is an office which, in every Synagogue, falls to the lot of one man for one day in the year, to wit, the Ninth of Tabernacles, more specifically termed the Rejoicing in the Law. The office is one of honor and distinction, and carries with it an accumulation of synagogal privileges. In the first place, the holder of it is accommodated with a seat in that exalted stronghold of communal dignity, the warden's box, with accessories in the shape of two fronting bouquets and an obsequious beadle ever on the watch to open the pew-door to his exits and en-

trances. Secondly, he walks close behind the Reader in the procession of the Scrolls, and finally, he is the object of a highly complimentary preamble—most trying to a man of modesty or humor—by which is prefaced his call to the reading-desk to hear the cantillating of his portion. This portion, as befits the occasion, is the most epoch-making of the year, for it consists of the concluding verses of the annual Pentateuchal Cycle, and the intoning of it winds up with a decorative vocal flourish and a vociferous response. However, as a set-off against these glories, there are certain drawbacks attached to the Bridegroomship, of which Mr. Diamond was uncomfortably conscious, and the enumeration of which he could safely leave to Mrs. Diamond.

As he wiped his feet on the mat outside the sitting-room, he devoutly wished he could resume life half an hour hence. Then his peril made him rise to a great stroke of policy, and instead of the hangdog abjectness that had usurped him ever since he had come to a proper understanding of his trespass, he entered with a show of suppressed triumph.

"Becky, my dear!"

"What's the matter, Diamond?" asked "Becky, my dear," calmly.

Mrs. Diamond had not changed much since her last appearance. The glasses she used for darning Diamond's socks—"he has such flat feet, you know, and treads them out at heels so quickly"—were a size stronger, and her Thursday-morning voice was still more incapable of modulation; but otherwise she was much the same, and Mr. Diamond knew it.

"Well?" she prompted, as she saw him struggling with his make-believe emotion.

"Becky, my dear, the Synagogue people have paid you a splendid compliment."

"What's that? Asked me to preach them a sermon on good manners and charity and . . ."

"Not exactly, Becky, my dear. But they have elected you Bride of the Law."

"Diamond, you know I object to your round-the-corner ways. Now what is it?"

Mr. Diamond was treading himself viciously on the toes; then he stammered:

"Well, Becky, my dear, if you're Bride of the Law, what would I be?"

Mrs. Diamond doffed her spectacles, stripped the half-darned sock off her arm and looked business-like.

"What would you be?" she repeated. "Surely you haven't let 'em talk you into it?"

"Talk me into it?" cried Mr. Diamond, eagerly. "I suppose you think it went begging. You ought to know what a rush there was for it. Preager and Tannenbaum said they would—but I mustn't tell you what goes on in the Committee."

"Mustn't you?" asked Mrs. Diamond significantly.

"Said they would give up their seats, because it was their turn, and—look what a great honor they paid me that I was picked out after all, Becky, my dear."

"And pray, who asked you to go hunting after any honor?" began Mrs. Diamond, ominously calm.

"Don't you know you've got a wife that gets more honor and respect than we can manage between the two of us? And how does she get it? On the cheap; that's where the cleverness comes in. Any fool can get himself made a fuss about, if he only spends

enough money on it. See if you won't get us sold up one of these days through your ungodly boastfulness, and then you'll find out how much your honor will fetch in the open market. But don't flatter yourself you're going to have it all your way, because you won't."

"I didn't expect I would, Becky, my dear," assented Mr. Diamond humbly; "but really it won't cost us as much as you think."

"Won't it? Perhaps you won't have to offer half a guinea in the Synagogue, and if you happen to be on the deaf side of the beadle, he'll fancy you said a guinea."

"But, Becky, my dear, I couldn't think of offering anything under a guinea."

"Then the beadle will fancy you said two. That's item number one. Now, what about the party? I suppose we'll have to order in a small brewery for the day. Or, do you think Preager and Tannebaum'll be too proud to drown their disappointment at your expense?"

"I'm quite sure they won't be," replied Mr. Diamond with a naïveté that was positively touching. Mrs. Diamond shot him a withering look before proceeding:

"And then you'll want a new suit of clothes."

"And you a new dress, Becky, my dear," added her husband, without the least trace of an afterthought.

For a moment Mrs. Diamond paused, taken aback; then the subtle nefariousness of Mr. Diamond's last remark came home to her, and stirred her to righteous indignation.

"Oh, you want to bribe me, do you? And a new

dress'll do the trick, will it? If I want a new dress, I'll wait till that dunder-headed Committee of yours makes you a Bridegroom of the Law, will I? Next, I dare say, you'll want me to ask them permission when I want to buy a penn'orth of salt or a packet of hair-pins, eh? If I was you, I'd beg 'em kindly to take over the managing of this house altogether, and put me on weekly wages. Diamond, when *shall* I be able to make something like a man of you?"

"I give it up," groaned Mr. Diamond, miserably huddling in the arm-chair.

"So do I. If only I'd taken Uncle Toby God-rest-his-soul's advice. Didn't he always say—said Uncle Toby—God-rest-his-soul—when he used to see the way you used to poke your head in at the door when we were courting, 'Becky, my girl,' he said, 'never marry a man that comes into the room half at a time. He'll never do the right thing in the right place.' And I'm blest if you ever did."

"Becky, my dear, not even when I married you?" asked Mr. Diamond with melting reproach.

"Yes, you did, just that once; and then it was more through luck than sense. And now you're going to do it a second time. Get yourself a sheet of note-paper."

Mr. Diamond went to the writing-case with alacrity. He had no idea what the note-paper was for; but at any rate it created a diversion, and that was good enough for the time being.

"And now you'll just write to the wardens and say it's off," directed Mrs. Diamond.

Mr. Diamond shrank back. He had not bargained for this. Of course, he had expected that his better

half would fume and rage and altogether behave disagreeably; but he had not for a moment thought that she would not give in at the end. It was dreadful. After solemnly pledging his word and receiving advance congratulations, he was now to show up as a perjurer and a renegade. But the worst of it was that the true cause of it would be divined. Now, he did not mind his wife's little tyrannies so long as they were confined to the precincts of the family circle; in fact, he would have regarded their absence as a violent breach in his normal existence. But he strongly objected that his domestic ignominy should fringe out into town talk. It never struck him that he had figured for years as the typical Mr. Henpeck of the neighborhood. Such are the saving powers of a proper self-respect. And now this letter was to give the game away. One hope he had, but that was knocked on the head by Mrs. Diamond's next words:

"Now, hurry up, because I want to post it myself to see that it really does go."

Groaning inwardly, Mr. Diamond took up the pen.

"Are you going to dictate?" he asked.

"Of course. Start writing date and address, and I'll just think a minute. Now, then. Say as follows: 'This is to inform you that I refuse to be Bridegroom of the Law, and I consider it a great shame to talk a man into something before he's had a chance of asking his wife.'"

"But, Becky, my dear, I can't write that," cried Mr. Diamond, his hair on end.

"Oh yes, you can, have a good try," said Mrs. Diamond encouragingly.

It was then that the heaven-sent inspiration, which proverbially waits for the eleventh hour of human dis-

tress, took pity on Mr. Diamond and flew down to his aid. Why must he follow his wife's dictation? thought Mr. Diamond. She might dictate what she pleased, and he might write what he deemed fit. The Rejoicing in the Law was still ten days ahead, and greater miracles had happened than for a woman to change her mind in ten days. And even if she did not, it would be too late to cry back and—well, even the devil cannot catch the hindmost, if the hindmost is too quick for him. In any case it gave him over a week's respite and to Mr. Diamond's procrastinatory philosophy that was worth any risk.

"Well, when you've done chewing that pen-holder," Mrs. Diamond broke in on his ruminations.

"I was only thinking how to put the letter into shape," said Mr. Diamond speciously.

"But I don't want you to put it into shape. I want them to have it plain and plump, and no extra compliments—understand what I mean?"

So Mr. Diamond wrote. Mrs. Diamond added another trenchant sentence or two, calculated to make the wardens review their past life, and find it a concatenation of black iniquities. Mr. Diamond set it all down with great complacency—much too great to escape Mrs. Diamond's suspicions. She took up the letter, and pretended to regard it with infinite displeasure.

"It isn't at all nicely written, considering it's to go to the wardens."

"It's nice enough for the nasty things I've said to them," replied Mr. Diamond bitterly.

"That's not your business. I'll just trouble you to make another copy of it."

Shrugging his shoulders, Mr. Diamond obeyed. Mrs. Diamond took up both copies, compared them, and put the first into the addressed envelope and the second into her pocket.

Mr. Diamond watched her mysterious proceedings, looking, though not speaking, his question.

"I'll get somebody to read it to me to-morrow morning—to see if you've put it word for word," she answered him.

Beyond one short galvanic shudder, Mr. Diamond felt nothing. His nerves were killed for the evening, and he was numbed to all further emotions.

"I'm going to bed, Becky, my dear," he said dispassionately.

"No, you won't. You'll wait till I come back."

And then Mrs. Diamond went out to post the letter. She took it to the pillar-box at the corner, and slipped it through the crevice. But the instant it was leaving her fingers, a sudden idea shot through her that made them dart after it frantically. It was too late, however. The letter rested snugly at the bottom of the box. The next collection was not till midnight; it was now half-past nine. Gathering up her skirts, she waddled back as no woman of her dimensions had ever waddled before.

"That comes of your flustering and flurrying me like that," she broke in on her husband.

"I flurried you?" stammered the latter.

"Of course you did. If you hadn't been in such a rush with that letter, I should have had time to remember about Mrs. Duveen."

"Remember about Mrs. Duveen?"

"To ask her down to the party. It would have

been a first-rate opportunity; she wouldn't have had the face to refuse this time. Why didn't you mention it to me?"

"You never let me mention anything, Becky, my dear," replied Mr. Diamond.

"None of your impertinence, Diamond; you'll wait up till the postman comes round to collect, and ask him to give you back the letter."

This was Mr. Diamond's supreme moment. "It isn't necessary, Becky, my dear."

"What d'you mean?"

"If you'll be good enough to let me have the copy you've got in your pocket, I'll tell you."

Mrs. Diamond handed it to him with a docility which at another time would have appeared uncanny to Mr. Diamond. Then, planting himself on the hearth-stone, he cleared his throat, and with a voice that made the brass chandelier ring, he read as follows:

"To the Wardens of the Peace-pursuing Brothers of Plotsk Synagogue. Gentlemen, I write to confirm what I said at the meeting. Namely, that I shall be glad to accept your nomination for Bridegroom of the Law. On informing my wife of the same, she was overwhelmed with joy. And wishes to express her thanks for the honor you have heaped upon us. Likewise I shall do my little best in what concerns the offerings. Which is only as it should be on such an occasion. And beg to remain your obedient servant Lazarus Diamond."

There was a momentary after-vibration of the chandelier, which Mr. Diamond could have sworn sounded like an Amen.

"And you really dared to write that?" asked Mrs. Diamond, after a pregnant pause.

"Dared? Why it was only the right thing in the right place—wasn't it?"

Mrs. Diamond looked at him from head to foot as one might a perfect stranger. Then she said, half in wonder and half in triumph:

"Diamond, I believe I'm making a man of you after all!"

CHAPTER XVI

EARLIER that very evening Leuw Lipcott sat in his counting house, though to call it such was rank flattery. A man-high partition, with a square foot of glass pane fitted in at the upper end, so as to permit a look out into the shop, the whole a piece of very bad workmanship, for it was Leuw's own—such were the offices of Messrs. Donaldson & Lipcott, where the purely clerical matters of the firm were attended to. But even this make-shift was better than the back parlor with its litter of wood splinters, feathers, and cardboard wreckage, not to mention the glue and the paints, which notoriously have a born passion for attaching themselves where they are least wanted; and Leuw objected strongly to getting his folios smudged.

It was the last day of the month, and in accordance with the immemorial custom of the firm, the accounts were being made out by Leuw, with Christopher seated close to him, dividing his wonder between the cryptic columns of figures and Leuw's sure, self-confident manner of handling them.

"Turnover better by nine pounds, eleven shillings and eightpence farthing than last year this month," announced Leuw, having come to the end of his calculations.

Christopher shook his head. "I can understand the pounds, the shillings, the pence," he said slowly, "but what beats me hollow is how you manage to get at that odd farthing."

Leuw laughed cheerily. "I don't think we'd have got on like this, if we hadn't looked after that odd farthing," he replied, closing the book with a bang.

"Yes, we have got on a bit, ain't we, Leuw?" said Christopher wistfully.

"And we'll have to get on-ner. Remember I'm a householder on my own now."

"Well, Leuw, my boy, I've let you have your way mostly in everything. Try as hard as you like for yourself."

"Then what about setting up our Mineral Water Factory?" asked Leuw smilingly.

"There you are again; I tell you it isn't time yet for launching out so big. Steady does it. But, of course, if you're so stiff on it, I can't prevent you. After all, you've got as much to say here as me and—God knows when the say'll be yours altogether.

"Christopher!" cried Leuw reproachfully.

This Mineral Water Factory, as well as several other suggestions of Leuw's for the expansion of the business, had been moot points between him and Christopher for some time past. Leuw saw many a chance of adding to their profits, but Christopher, with the caution of old age, was loath to leave the beaten tracks of their routine; and though Leuw at times managed to extort from him a quasi-consent, he felt bound to look upon it in the light of a downright refusal. But he never grumbled—not even to himself. Each time that old Christopher—he was indeed old Christopher now—expressed his objection, Leuw was recompensed by the thought that, by submitting to him unconditionally and putting shackles upon his own desires, he was paying off a tithe of

gratitude to the friend to whom he owed so much. And far from being a vexation of soul, his rebuffs became to Leuw a taste of the sweetness of self-sacrifice.

"Now, let me put you into your overcoat, and come along," said Leuw a little later. "Mother told me particularly to bring you home for the house-warming. She couldn't possibly do without you."

"No, thanks, not to-night, boy. Want to nurse myself this evening. I feel a bit shaky."

"We'll nurse you all right—better than you would yourself. We'll walk slowly down to the High Street, and take the tram right to the very turning. It's only the second house from the top."

But Christopher persisted in his refusal. "I'm only a stranger, and you'll want to be by yourselves the first evening; and your brother is coming down, too, you say. Ask me again in a week or two."

With that Leuw had to rest contented. He went out to put up the shutters—they had agreed to close an hour earlier to-night—and came back to what now served old Christopher not only as workshop but also as sitting and bedroom. The upper chamber, which had combined the purposes of the latter two, had become a year ago a magazine for stock, to the great satisfaction of Christopher, because it implied growth of business, and much more, because by a bad arrangement, over which he had no control, the staircase seemed to lengthen out just at the time when his breath became considerably shorter.

"Then I'll just make you comfortable for the evening," said Leuw. And in a twinkling the floor was swept of its litter, the glue and paint-pots had disappeared into their cupboard, and the grate blazed up

high with added fuel, for Christopher now always imagined he felt cold, and nothing but the sight of a fire, even in the summer, would counteract his fancy. Leuw pulled up the arm-chair, of which he had made Christopher a present on his last birthday, put the kettle on, and dished up the supper of cold meat, bread, and pickles. Then he fetched out the bottle of rum, and sliced up a lemon, for now that Christopher had definitely discarded his pipe, with recurrent maledictions on that nuisance of an asthma, he was reluctantly compelled to resort to a glass or two of hot rum to woo the sleep which otherwise fled his eyelids. It was a sad day for the old man when he had to strip his buttonhole of its blue ribbon. It was to him as though he had lost caste.

"I don't think I've forgotten anything," said Leuw, looking round him.

"Don't think so either. Who ever knew Leuw Lipcott to forget anything?"

Leuw smiled his pleasure at the compliment. "Then, till to-morrow," he said, his hand on Christopher's shoulder.

"Yes, and be careful to walk into the house right foot first. Ah! I forgot you don't believe in those things."

"No, but I believe in doing what you're pleased at. That's why it'll be right foot first."

It was now Christopher's turn to smile his thanks, on which Leuw made his departure. Usually it was a smile of Christopher's that was taken to act as the full stop to the day's proceedings.

Leuw swung down the street as if he owned it and a few more besides. Why should he not feel buoyant?

The world had gone, was going, well with him. Certainly, in the five years that had passed he had not spared himself. But the strenuousness and the striving, the battling through summer's heat and winter's cold, the obstinate wrestling with the malignant power of untoward circumstance had not gone for nothing. From the very start Leuw had made his influence felt in the business. It began to move slowly. Although Christopher showed himself adverse to any radical departure from old-fashioned methods, he readily countenanced any attempt of Leuw's—and of these each week saw at least one—to develop the concern on more legitimate lines. So it was that Donaldson & Lipcott—for Leuw had yielded after the first year to old Christopher's importunities, and had allowed his name to figure over the shop door—Donaldson & Lipcott, let it be known, had advanced from a tenth-rate retail house to the position of wholesale agency and distributing centre to the neighborhood. It supplied goods to at least a dozen of the little trumpery-stores that played at being shops, and somehow the reputation of the firm for fair dealing and cheapness had taken root among the itinerant hawkers and barrow-mongers for a mile round. And as a matter of fact, it was not very long before Leuw had discovered the sinful uselessness of the middleman, and had gone straight to the manufacturers for his supplies. Once he was even bold enough to suggest to Christopher the advisability of opening negotiations with Germany, but the latter had flouted the idea as being too venturesome, and, moreover, savoring to some extent of a want of patriotic sentiment. It was out of sheer disappointment at the rebuff that

Leuw that same afternoon obtained by personal canvass the contract to furnish with toys and sweetmeats for its periodic treats an Elementary School, to which, in the course of time, he had added four others.

With his success grew Leuw's self-respect, which, however, he took good care did not degenerate into a smug self-complacency. It manifested itself chiefly in the sense of incongruity between the sordidness of Narrow Alley and his possession of a balance to his credit at the Post Office Savings Bank. And so, when, three weeks ago, he informed his mother that he had rented a house in a respectable side-turning off the Mile End Road, at sixteen shillings a week, Mrs. Lipcott expressed no surprise; for she had long since left off wondering at anything that Leuw did. It was quite three years ago that she had given up the menial drudgery of the wash-tub, and if she now occupied herself in the more dignified department of needlework, for which she stood in great demand among her former patrons, it was only at her own earnest entreaty to be allowed a pastime. The removal from Narrow Alley had taken place two days before. The new furniture, of course, had necessitated some blood-letting of the Savings Bank account, but Leuw had early come to a correct view of money as a means to an end, as the servant and not as the master. He had confirmed the correctness of his view by the pleasure it had given him to see the loaded van pull up and discharge itself piece by piece into the new home. When he had left for business that morning, everything stood in its right place, and the final touches could be safely delegated to his mother. And now, as he inserted the key into the house door, his heart

beat as high as that of any monarch on first entering into his kingdom.

His mother came running out into the passage. Silently he embraced her. And that was all which the two considered necessary—they wondered it was so much—in the matter of mutual congratulation.

"Phil come yet?" asked Leuw, stepping into the sitting-room.

"He wrote he wouldn't be here before eight," replied Mrs. Lipcott, looking at the new clock for the twentieth time that day—with an unwonted but comforting feeling that she could tell to a hair's breadth at what rate the world was moving.

Leuw utilized the interval for a critical inspection, while Mrs. Lipcott descended to the area-kitchen, where the hissing and broiling hearth-range claimed her, and where, from its place of honor, the old copper kettle shone upon her with melancholy pride at being the sole surviving relic of a departed order of things.

It was not till twenty minutes past eight that a rat-tat, which could only be Phil's, brought them both to the door.

"Couldn't find the place," Phil explained his lateness, after exchanging greetings. "Seemed so funny to have to knock at the house door to be let in to you—they never went in for knockers and rarely for house doors in Narrow Alley, you will remember. Pretty little cottage this." And then, sinking his voice, he continued: "Who lives downstairs?"

"We do," said Leuw.

"And the top floor?"

"The same!"

"And this floor?"

"The people that live top and bottom," replied Leuw with a twinkle.

"What! you don't mean to say you keep the whole house?"

At that Leuw's twinkle developed into a hearty laugh, in which Mrs. Lipcott joined, though in her case it presently became hushed, and she took to fumbling vaguely at her apron; then she did some hard blinking, and her eyes saw clear again. She might well feel moved to pride that overflowed into thankfulness. It was some time since she had seen her two boys together, and now, after the long interval of comparison, each seemed to set the other off to better advantage. Phil had grown tall—he stood half a head higher than Leuw—and on the lithe, straight frame poised the student's face and forehead with the clear-cut profile and sensitive mouth and the soft dreamy eyes, which, however—one suspected—could look very hard and wide-a-wake once the brain behind them had set out in pursuit of the goal to be attained. The air of delicate refinement about him stood out well against, and at the same time accentuated, the sturdy strength of Leuw—of Leuw, cast altogether in a heavier mould, with his extensive ridge of shoulder, which he carried as though in veritable challenge to the burdens of life. The features at first glance appeared commonplace, showing nothing of the inner man, until one got a hint from the square-hewn chin, and noted, with a start almost, the absolute neutrality of the eyes that made their owner a sphinx which kept its own counsel, and would never let you know how much it knew of yours. A contradictory

face it was, formidable, and yet sterlingly honest and making it depend, as it were, on the state of your conscience, which of the two you were to consider it. And as Mrs. Lipcott's glance passed from Phil to Leuw and from Leuw back again to Phil, she knew that, however little of the credit might belong to her, it was with a good heart that she could hold her face up to the world and call herself a mother.

With true housewifely pride, Mrs. Lipcott dragged Phil off to point out to him, one by one, the glories of the well-appointed kitchen, and then handed him over to Leuw, while she laid the table for supper in the adjoining breakfast-room. Phil followed Leuw over the remainder of the house with a persistent silence, which Leuw, as a natural conclusion, set down to astonishment.

But when Phil spoke next, his voice sounded anything but surprised.

"Why didn't you tell me about all this before?"

"Why, what difference would it have made?" smiled Leuw.

"Oh, not much. Besides it was quite a selfish sort of reason that made me ask the question."

"Selfish?"

"Well, it would have saved me worrying about you, and kept my thoughts more steadily to my work, had I known."

"That never struck me," stammered Leuw, taken aback; "and I thought you'd guess."

"Of course I guessed; but that's what I complain of. I never dared to guess as much as this; and now, when I ought to be wringing your hand off in congratulation, I can only feel like a fool that's been jolly well hoaxed."

Leuw was still floundering about for a reply, when Mrs. Lipcott called up the staircase informing them that everything was ready. Silently the two descended.

"Well, I never—what a spread, mother!" exclaimed Phil cheerily.

Leuw at once noticed the change in Phil's demeanor, but the change gave him little satisfaction, because it was only too obvious that it was mainly due to regard for their mother and not for himself. He grew painfully perplexed. It almost humiliated him to find Phil in a mood he could not understand.

"I hope you've kept yourself hungry for it," said Mrs. Lipcott.

"I've tried to, but you mustn't mind if I don't quite come up to your expectation."

That he certainly did not, and it was a wonder to Leuw how persistently he kept up his good humor and genial flow of talk beneath Mrs. Lipcott's pressing remonstrances. It was plain that Phil had determined to make the occasion the success it deserved to be, at whatever cost to himself. And Leuw's gratitude made him feel the brotherhood between them as he had never felt it before.

"I may start residence at Cambridge in a fortnight," said Phil presently.

"What! so soon?" came from Leuw and his mother.

"I needn't for another twelvemonth, but what's the use of wasting time? The day after to-morrow I'm going up for my entrance scholarship. It will depend on my getting it."

"Leave something for the other chaps—there's a good boy," jested Leuw.

"Let the other chaps look after themselves," replied Phil with a truculence hardly called for by Leuw's jest.

It was the plea of having to "put in" another hour's reading before bedtime that obtained Phil permission to cut his visit much shorter than usual. At first, he seemed inclined to make a further departure from custom by refusing Leuw's company to the station; but Leuw, for the first time that evening, asserted his old ascendancy, by just putting on his hat and preceding Phil into the street.

"What's the matter, Phil?" he asked abruptly, as soon as they had fallen into step.

"I knew you were going to ask that," replied Phil, "and that was why I didn't want you to come."

"And now I've come, you may as well tell me."

"Well, you saw what was the matter. Wasn't I bad-tempered enough?"

"You seemed a bit snappy with me," said Leuw quietly.

"That's where you are wrong. I wasn't quarreling with you at all; I was quarreling with myself."

"Yes, I suppose that's very annoying, to feel keen on a good old row and have nobody to answer you back."

"I'm not joking, Leuw. And do you know why I am angry with myself?"

"No, but you're just going to tell me."

"Because I'm jealous of you, Leuw, I'm horribly jealous of you."

Leuw stopped in amazement. Then, "Phil, what do you mean?" escaped him.

"I mean that you've done such a lot and I nothing at all, and I'm only a year younger than you."

"Goodness me—where's the lot I've done?"

Phil looked at him keenly. "I know it isn't vanity that makes you ask that," he replied slowly. "You don't want me to sing your praises. But what's the meaning of all I've seen to-night?"

"The meaning? A few years of honest work with a stroke or two of luck thrown in. That's all. And how about yourself, Mr. Grumbler?" continued Leuw, checking Phil's reply. "What about those dozens of prizes and things you've pulled off? What about being the youngest head boy your school ever had? That's nothing, of course. And just let me tell you, the way you got your little lot is better than mine, because it's all honest work, and flukes don't count in your line of business. The difference between the two of us is, that I'm contented with what I've got, because I know there's a lot more to come, and can wait for it, and you—well, you're cross with to-morrow because it isn't to-day."

"No, Leuw, that's not what makes me discontented," said Phil soberly. "It's the thought that however much I may do, I'll never be able to give myself a single 'thank you' for it. Take yourself. Whatever you've done, you needn't deduct any discount off it, and make it so cheap that it's hardly worth anything. Goodness! how proud it must make you feel to look at what you've got and say it's all through you and for you. But what I've got is all through and for a stranger—the dearest woman, God bless her, that ever was, next to mother—but a stranger all the same. And to get it, I bartered away the only legacy father left me—his name. Leuw, I'd exchange all the scholarships I've ever had or

am likely to have, for the privilege of having bought a single quatern loaf for mother—I hardly dare to say *my* mother.”

Leuw heard him out patiently, and then shook his head.

“No, Phil, you don’t put the case properly at all. In the first place it’s all bunkum about my belonging lock, stock, and barrel, to myself and owing nobody. Where would I have been, if old Christopher hadn’t come my way, and held me up under the arms till I had learnt to stand on my own feet, if needs be? But that’s the worst of you studying chaps; you’ve only got to be touched with a finger-tip, and you wriggle.”

“Perhaps I *am* too sensitive,” admitted Phil; “most of us Jews are that, you know.”

“Well, a lot of prodding makes you rather tender,” continued Leuw, “but that’s hardly to the point. You call yourself names because you weren’t independent and all that sort of thing like me. If you had been, you bet your boots you wouldn’t have been alive at all. Supposing you hadn’t got your chance in the nick of time, what would have happened? Very likely you’d have gone in for the same thing as me, and have worried yourself dead knowing that you weren’t suited, and were only making a hash of yourself. Or else, not being able to withstand your natural liking, you’d have plodded on killingly at the game you’re now playing nice and comfortable, and have knocked your brains out trying to get through a brick wall. Now, what pays better, especially for us Jews, to get a leg-up to the top or to trudge your own weary way down to a cropper? And what concerns father’s legacy, as you call it—that’s all right.

As long as you put some shine into the name of Jew, dad won't mind what particular name the Jew goes by."

Phil pondered Leuw's words for a minute or so. "You know what?" he said finally. "It seems to me that I've lost even more than I thought by leaving home."

"Why! what have you lost now?"

"Watching you make progress. I've got to know dozens and dozens of fellows during my time at school—rattling fine ones, some of them, I can assure you. But I don't think the lot of them together have taught me the things that one doesn't get from books half as well as you might have taught me them. Now that's a compliment, Leuw, but I stick to it."

"Compliments are only compliments when you can take them with one hand and pass them back with the other. And I take yours, Phil," said Leuw gravely.

"It took me a long time to understand," went on Phil; "but it's clear as daylight to me now—your refusing to come up to Aunt's all these years. Do you know, I set it down to sheer pig-headedness or some stupid sort of sulks. Instead, you were only nursing your self-respect, sort of waiting till you might meet them equal to equal. And that's what you meant by your 'It isn't time yet.' Am I right, Leuw?"

"Yes, that was pretty well my idea of it."

"Well, as for me, I can't help fancying that if anybody sweller than I had only held their finger up to me, I shouldn't have bothered much about self-respect, and have walked straight into their parlor, and sat down in their best easy-chair. But you—oh! I did feel annoyed last prize-day, when you hid right

at the back of the hall, and rushed mother off as soon as you could, only to get out of Aunt's way, I suppose. She was awfully disappointed; and as for Dulcie—she made me fag all through the crowd to look for you. She said she didn't believe I was two inches taller than you, and she wanted to see for herself."

Leuw turned his head from Phil's reproachful glance.

"It was grand, Phil, grand," he replied, ignoring Phil's main point, "to see you stand up there before those hundreds of people, and hear you rattle off that long speech without turning a hair, and all the other boys cheering the roof off for you each time you walked on to the platform to get the medals and the books—I tell you, Phil, you bought mother her quartern loaf that day."

"Do you think so?" asked Phil anxiously.

"A quartern and a half, Phil. And you said she—what's her name, Dulcie, sent you to look for me—for us—why, fancy, here we are at the station."

"Of course, I shall let you know at once how I've got on," said Phil.

"You may as well tell me now," said Leuw.

Phil laughed, and Leuw regarded his laugh as an achievement. He still did not quite know what to make of Phil's behavior, and would have considered it no explanation to be told that he had for the first time come into contact with the artistic temperament.

But what he considered more inexplicable still was that the little lady whom he had once offended by calling her gloves mittens should think it worth while after all this time to make sure that he was two inches shorter than Phil.

CHAPTER XVII

"NEVER mind, Effie, dear—they'll be all right. Don't cry any more," said Dulcie.

"I c-can't help it," sobbed Effie.

"Let's put our hair up and play at being 'out,'" suggested Dulcie.

"How could I, Dulcie? With papa and mamma gone away for six months all the way to Australia, and papa looking so white and poorly; and oh! Dulcie, I feel so frightened about what I said a few weeks ago."

"What was that? I don't remember."

"Yes, you do. The day I pinned that wool monkey to the back of Mademoiselle's jacket, and she walked out into the street like that, and all the people laughed at her, and she came back in a dreadful paddy, and gave notice, and papa threatened he'd send me to a boarding school. . . ."

"Oh, yes," broke in Dulcie, "and you said that rather than go there you'd run away, and ask them to take you in at the first orphan asylum you came across."

"It's that orphan asylum that frightens me," gulped Effie. "Suppose God took me at my word? Do you think He might, Dulcie?"

"I don't think so, but to be on the safe side you might stop crying a moment or two and pray He shouldn't."

And while Effie is acting on her friend's suggestion.

the opportunity may be taken to explain that four days ago Mr. and Mrs. Elkin had started on an extended sea journey, because the former's health had broken down suddenly. Effie, without having her wishes consulted in the matter, had been left behind in charge of Mrs. Duveen, for Mrs. Elkin desired to bestow her whole and undivided attention on her invalid husband, without having to give toll of it to that wayward fifteen-year-old of hers. And now the latter was unbosoming her grief at the occurrence in the seclusion of what had been set apart for herself and Dulcie as a school-room, after solemn assurances from both that they would not look upon the arrangement as a heaven-sent opportunity for indulging in a bacchanalia of idleness.

"I feel much better now," said Effie, after a pause. "I know why I was taken like that to-night—because everybody's out, Auntie Duveen paying visits, and Uncle Bram said he'd come early, and he hasn't, and Phil gone up to Cambridge to try for that scholarship of his. . . ."

"But I'm here," interrupted Dulcie.

"You? You're only another me, and that's exactly what makes it sad and lonely twice over."

Dulcie was dubious whether or not to construe this into a compliment; then giving herself the benefit of the doubt, she remarked:

"If I feel sad, I like to be quite alone till I have felt it all out of me."

"Oh! different people have different ways of doing it," replied Effie, with an assumption of great wisdom.

"My way is as good as yours, though, I should think," said Dulcie.

"There's nothing like having a good opinion of yourself," said Effie loftily. "I should call yours a jolly rotten way."

"Effie! You know it isn't ladylike to talk slang."

"I'll talk anything I like. I'd talk French to you, only you're such a dunce you wouldn't understand it."

"Not your French, I don't suppose. So you needn't try."

"Of course, you always must have the last word," flung Effie.

"That's better than having the first—in a quarrel," retorted Dulcie.

"Anyway, you haven't got much manners; else you'd remember I was your guest and got to be treated politely."

Dulcie gave a gasp and looked at Effie. Effie saw the look of contrition start over the other's face, and the next moment a miniature cannonade proceeded from the two closely pressed mouths.

"Dear, dear, now we've quarreled again, and we promised Phil we wouldn't any, any more," exclaimed Effie, flinging the straggling strands of gipsy hair back into their place; "but it does feel so lovely making up again afterwards—doesn't it, Dulcie, dear?"

"And I only kept it going so that you might forget a bit about your papa and mamma."

"Oh, you dear!"

"And that's a good enough reason for Phil not scolding us for not keeping our word."

"I'm sorry I didn't keep my word; but who cares about Phil's scolding?"

"I do; and you as well. You know you do."

Effie opened her lips mutinously, and, shutting them again on second thoughts, averted her head.

"You know, Effie," said Dulcie confidentially, "when I've done anything wrong, I feel more afraid of Phil than I do of mamma."

"Yes, that's because his way of scolding makes you so uncomfortable. He doesn't call you any names, and he doesn't use spiteful words, but he just looks at you—at me, I should rather say—with such a God-forgive-you sort of face that I feel I ought to pack up my things and go to boggy without saying good-by to any one. I knew he was a goody-goody the first time I saw him."

"He isn't a 'goody-goody,'" flared up Dulcie; "he made eighty-seven 'not out' for his school the last cricket match of the season."

It was not quite so obvious how that disproved Effie's allegation, but Effie seemed to accept it as a repudiation, for she said:

"That's true. Still, I don't see why you should get so indignant about it. You used to hate him in the beginning. You told me so many a time, you know."

Dulcie colored. "Only because I was a little fool," she said; "and now I'm making up for it by being proud of him all I can."

"Oh, why didn't mamma get hold of an elder brother like that for me?" broke out Effie suddenly, with an angry stamp of her foot. "Nobody ever gave me what I really wanted. Sometimes I try for hours at a stretch to fancy myself a boy, so that I might feel what it is like to be my own brother."

Dulcie laughed a little, but immediately resumed seriousness when she saw Effie meant what she said.

"Still, I haven't kept him all to myself; I've let you have a fair share of him, haven't I?"

"That's what makes it worse. It's like accepting charity. Oh! Dulcie, you're ever so much better than I am. If he were mine, you could have broken your heart, and I wouldn't have let you have even his little finger. Dulcie, stop your ears while I say it: once or twice I could almost have hated you for having to be grateful to you. Am I not wicked?"

"Not wicked, only very proud," replied Dulcie, a little disconcerted by Effie's vehemence; "but then, of course, it isn't your fault that your papa comes from those old Jewish—what do you call them? Oh! yes, *Hidalgos*."

"Not my fault?" echoed Effie with glistening eyes. "And perhaps you think I blame him for it? Why, I'd sooner be a Spanish Jewess than an English duchess, though it isn't such a bad thing to be that. Oh, they were a grand lot! I've read all about them—every word. You know, Phil once wrote an essay about them, and I got hold of it on the sly. And when he came to describe how they were burnt before all the people—well, I could almost smell the burning flesh. . . ."

"Ugh," interjected Dulcie.

"And could hear them singing 'The Lord is King,' with their last breath—oh! it was fine. You don't know how sorry I am I wasn't born in those days," went on Effie with rapturous regret, "just for the glory of getting burnt at the stake and having essays written about you. Now I can just imagine myself walking along in the procession! I bet you I'd have made the Grand Inquisitor so angry that he wouldn't have given me any brushwood, so that I might frizzle longer. And I should have enjoyed it tremendously—especially the procession."

"Yes, but didn't they have to wear sugar-loaf hats, and long robes with things painted on them?" Dulcie reminded her.

Effie's face fell. "Oh, I forgot that. That wouldn't have done at all. You can't look very stately and dignified with a sugar-loaf hat on your head and colored little devils crawling all over your dress, can you?"

"Not very," agreed Dulcie.

"And that's I think the real reason why some of the women pretended to turn Christian," said Effie with conviction.

Dulcie, however, was thinking of something else.

"But it's a good thing to be proud; I wish I were."

"What makes you say that?"

"Then, perhaps, I should leave off sending people messages when they don't answer them."

"Dulcie, you haven't been writing love-letters?"

"Effie, how can you say that!"

"Well, then, why make so much mystery?"

"I didn't make any mystery. I told you each time I did it. About Phil's brother, you know—asking him to come and see us."

"There you are again, with Phil's brother. That's all you seem to think of."

"I don't," cried Dulcie indignantly; "I don't think of him for months at a time. It's only when I happen to hear mamma telling Uncle Bram about the poor people she's been to see down the East End that I remind myself of the time—twice it was—when mamma let me come with her, and how sorry I felt for him with his thin cheeks and peaky mouth and patched elbows. . . I only want to meet him once more, just to see whether he still looks so hungry."

"Well, why don't you ask Phil?"

"What! ask Phil whether his brother still looks starved?" cried Dulcie, aghast.

"No, I don't suppose he would like it," conceded Effie hastily. "But I wouldn't worry any more about the other one; he can't be up to much, or he wouldn't keep on hiding himself like that. I dare say he's become a cobbler's boy or something equally grand, and goes about all day with a greasy apron and a dirty face."

"Perhaps it is as you say, Effie; but I do hope he isn't a cobbler's boy," said Dulcie fervently; "for Phil's sake," she added as an afterthought.

Her uncertainty on the matter was natural, considering the fact that Phil, acting on Leuw's instructions, only referred to the latter's occupation in vague and general terms; and the recollection of this, recurring to Dulcie's mind, tended to add a darker hue to her misgivings. It made her very sad. She wished with all her heart that she could get herself to believe in Leuw Lipcott. She would even have preferred to know that he spurned her overtures for further acquaintance out of pure dislike for herself, rather than out of a sense of his own unworthiness. She would have preferred it—for Phil's sake, she told herself.

A vigorous tug at the street bell roused her from the meditations into which she had drifted.

"Auntie Duveen," cried Effie.

"No, she doesn't ring like that—it's Uncle Bram," said Dulcie.

"I say, Dulcie, while I think of it, you won't tell Phil I've been crying such a lot?"

"Of course not."

"Nor that I read his essay on the sly?"

"Unless I want to own up about myself as well," smiled Dulcie. "Where do you think I got to know about the sugar-loaf hats?"

A resonant "ahem" outside the door precluded a further interchange of confessions, and sent the two flying into the arms of the entering Uncle Bram. The part of him that received first attention was his pockets.

"Now, then, you thieves—I shall have you up for highway robbery," he exclaimed, looking ludicrously grim and bristling, but standing stiff as a statue to facilitate the process of overhauling. Effie and Dulcie squeaked delighted defiance at his anger, and flourished their booty—pink square boxes tied with rose ribbon—provokingly in his face. Such was usually the routine of Uncle Bram's entrance.

"Pay up immediately—no credit given," he commanded. And he had no need to play the dun; the two mouths settled promptly.

Then, having put himself back into tolerable shape, Uncle Bram asked: "Any letter or wire from Phil? Jane said she didn't know."

"Nothing since last night," replied Dulcie, not very distinctly.

"H'm," grumbled Uncle Bram, "if I had known that, I shouldn't have hurried so to get back."

"Oh! that's why you promised to come in early, did you?" pouted Effie. "Then you can go away again."

"And come back with more chocolates, eh? Oh! the ingratitude of this world," said Uncle Bram sorrowfully to the ceiling.

"Then don't make uncomplimentary remarks," retorted Effie; "we're as good as Phil any day, though we may not be half so clever!"

"Dulcie, won't you protect your poor old uncle against these cruelties?" groaned Uncle Bram.

"Certainly not—you deserve them. But you can have a caramel if you promise not to do it again."

And what could Uncle Bram do but swallow the caramel—for which he had a cordial dislike—as a tacit guarantee of good behavior? He had long ago come to the conclusion that it would be useless to attempt to revolt against his self-imposed oppressors. But even thus he could not resist the folly of trying to wreak upon them a cruel revenge.

"To-morrow evening begins the Feast of Tabernacles," he said reflectively.

"Yes, and we're going to help to decorate the Synagogue Tabernacle," cried Effie.

"Like we did last year and the year before," added Dulcie proudly.

It may be stated for the benefit of the uninitiated—if only in illustration of the tenacity of the Jewish character—that the forty years of wanderings in the wilderness are commemorated even now, after the lapse of a score and a half of centuries, by the erection of wooden foliage-roofed structures—symbolic tents. As a compromise for those whom lack of space or inclination forefends from attaching such a one to their homes, there exists, adjoining most places of worship, a congregational building, in the beautification of which the lady relatives of the more prominent members take a special delight. Hence the futile fiendishness of Uncle Bram's plan.

"I presume you are aware that I'm the warden of our Synagogue," he continued with affected guilelessness.

"Of course," replied Dulcie; "that's exactly why we get permission to make ourselves useful."

"That's exactly why to-morrow you will not get permission to make yourselves useful," mimicked Uncle Bram.

"What do you mean? You can't stop us," said Dulcie.

"Can't I? I shall simply give Mr. Brown, the caretaker, strict orders not to admit you."

Dulcie laughed out derisively, but Effie, somehow, seemed inclined to take the matter more seriously.

"And you know what I will do?" she said, planting herself formidably in front of Uncle Bram. "I'll sneak out while the service is on, and pull everything to pieces—I will."

Dulcie plucked her furtively by the sleeve and whispered:

"Don't Effie; don't you see he's only joking?"

"What! Uncle Bram, you were only joking?" asked Effie with a naïveté which ought to have warned everybody who only knew her a quarter.

But Uncle Bram, the simpleton, took her in good faith and guffawed hugely.

"In that case, he's got to be punished for frightening us," continued Effie, affecting a great indignation. "Dulcie, what is he to buy you?"

Then Uncle Bram saw the trap into which he had been lured, and, though he struggled heroically, he was not let off before having been mulcted of a "Daniel Deronda" for Dulcie—all for her own self,

with her name on the fly-leaf—and an album of Brahms for Effie. Possibly it might have gone much harder with him, were it not for the arrival of Mrs. Duveen, who was known to object to such exploitation of her brother. Her first question was about news from Phil.

“I can’t understand it,” she said disappointedly; “he must have written last night. Ah! here it is,” she exclaimed as the perennial Jane brought in a letter on a tray.

“That’s not from Phil,” said Effie, though she was furthest off.

“Oh no, it isn’t,” cried Mrs. Duveen, almost dropping it in her vexation. “From whom can it be? Oh, dear, it’s from that Mrs. Diamond,” she went on, her vexation now tempered with amusement. “Invitation cards for something: ‘Mr. and Mrs. Diamond request the pleasure of your company on the occasion of their being Bridegroom of the Law,’” she read; “and here’s another for you Bram—to the Treasurer of the Synagogue Union, and another to Miss Dulcie and Master Phil, and a four-page letter to all of us—what on earth are we to do, Bram?”

“Go, of course,” said Bram; “you know she won’t leave us in peace till she has dragged us down to her house.”

“I suppose so,” agreed Mrs. Duveen resignedly; “so let’s start at making up our minds to it at once. Oh! what a nuisance—and I kept away as long as possible to give Phil’s wire more chance of coming.”

“Don’t fidget like that, Rose,” said Uncle Bram. “Surely Phil can be trusted to take care of himself.”

“I am not thinking of that, Bram, but I’m afraid

it's a bad sign. He said the papers were looked through immediately, and the result known the day after; that's to-day."

"Phil's never missed anything he's gone in for, and he'd be so disgusted to break his record," chimed in Dulcie.

Effie said nothing, but her face bore a curious expression of consciousness, which, however, no one remarked; and, of course, it never struck anybody to ask whether it was something more than good eyesight that made her so pat in declaring that the address on the letter just received was not in Phil's handwriting. Then they all went down to dinner, during which Mrs. Diamond's invitation came in for more detailed discussion; Effie proved herself vastly entertaining by giving excellent imitations of that good lady's more pronounced peculiarities, whereat even Mrs. Duveen could only exclaim, "Don't Effie," and laugh. But despite the merriment many an anxious glance was cast at the mantle-piece clock, and when it struck nine, a general air of resignation settled down upon the room.

A minute or two later the door opened, and Phil stepped in with a "Good evening, all you people. Don't look so frightened. I came in through the area-door."

"Well?" came a shout from Mrs. Duveen, Uncle Bram, and Dulcie.

"He's got it," said Effie calmly.

"Yes, I've got it right," laughed Phil; "and I'll have some supper, too, if you don't mind."

"Oh, you naughty, naughty boy," exclaimed Mrs. Duveen, reproachfully; "why didn't you wire? We should have known it hours ago."

"I thought you might prefer me to be my own messenger," answered Phil, a little awkwardly, perhaps.

"You weren't born with that hat on, were you?" jested Uncle Bram.

"Oh! I beg your pardon," said Phil, removing it, and at the same time looking at Effie, who nodded intelligently. Phil made a rather spasmodic supper, because between his mouthfuls he had to answer at least three questions concerning his first impressions and experiences of the "Varsity," as he insisted on calling it on every possible occasion; nor did the marvelous additions to his vocabulary, such as "dons," "gyps," "commons," "bed-maker," "oak-sporting," and other academic technicalities, fail to produce the due effect of awe on his wide-eared listeners. Altogether this was a different Phil to the one of only four days ago. He had brought back with him an air of assurance, of manly nonchalance—his very voice seemed to have become deeper, fuller; and Uncle Bram was debating with himself seriously whether or not he ought to offer him a cigar.

"When do they expect you up?" asked Mrs. Duveen.

"Next Monday week," replied Phil.

"And you won't be sorry to get rid of us commonplace people, eh, young man?" asked Uncle Bram genially.

Phil's face assumed a very serious look—much more serious than the pleasantries warranted—as he answered:

"Indeed, I shall, Uncle Bram."

"And then he'll soon be back here again; term only lasts eight weeks," said Effie, proud of being the first

to remember the mitigatory fact. But it seemed strange that Phil, who surely was cognizant of it better than anyone, should have omitted to adduce it, and stranger still that, now it had been pointed out, he should let it pass without corroboration. Nay, more—he appeared embarrassed, and Mrs. Duveen noted it.

“There, don’t worry him any more,” she said, “or we’ll never get him to tell us anything again. It’s our turn now to give him a sensation.”

And glad of the wherewithal to create a diversion, she produced Mrs. Diamond’s invitation.

“Will you come?” asked Effie anxiously.

“Certainly, if you’re all going,” replied Phil.

“Then we may as well answer at once, and set the poor soul’s mind at rest,” suggested Uncle Bram; and Mrs. Duveen agreed.

“And I’m going to see that you don’t forget to mention we are going to bring Effie,” said Dulcie, following them out into the library.

Effie and Phil remained alone with a somewhat strained silence between them that made the room look twice its size. Presently Effie got up, humming a snatch of song, a little out of tune, and walked over to the piano. The music-stool seemed strangely refractory, because it required a good deal of handling before it would stand properly in the centre.

But she had only got through the opening bars of a furious allegro that sounded horribly out of keeping with the preceding stillness, when she jumped straight off the stool, came over to where Phil was standing watching her, and looked at him hard.

“So you kept your word,” she said.

"Of course I did. Didn't you think I would?"

"No, but I wish you hadn't."

"Why! I thought you wanted to . . ."

"Yes, yes," came the querulous reply; "I wanted to be mean, as mean as mean could be, and you oughtn't to have let me."

"I'm very sorry," said Phil, half at random.

"It didn't strike me till I saw how terribly Auntie Duveen fidgeted," continued Effie. "If I hadn't been such a miserable coward, I should have gone up to her and said: 'It's my fault. I made him promise not to write, because I wanted to know the result before anybody else did, if only a second earlier, and if he keeps his hat on when he comes in, it means that he's got it. And for the sake of just one second, I'm giving you hours of agony.' It was like a—like a conspiracy. Oh, Phil, why didn't you tell me of it?"

Phil looked past her. "I did want to tell you," he quavered; "but you were so sad and wretched at your father and mother having gone away, and I thought it would please you if I agreed to what you asked—it did please you a little, didn't it?"

Effie nodded mournfully.

"And then, for another thing," added Phil, his voice quite steady, "you deserved to know first."

She lifted her eyes in wonder. "Deserved it? How?"

"I don't think I should have done such good work if I hadn't known you," replied Phil, his tone once more unsteady.

Effie shook her head pensively. "I can't imagine how I made any difference."

"I can't either," said Phil readily, "but I fancy it

was my listening to your . . ." and Phil jerked his head in the direction of the piano.

"But I never saw you listen," said Effie.

"Did you look?" asked Phil with a smile.

Effie hesitated. "Well, yes, I did look," she replied finally, "ever so many times; and you just sat there reading away for dear life, it seemed like, and for all you cared I might play myself dead."

"In fact, you thought me stone deaf."

"I thought you awfully rude, and so I was ditto, and never asked whether I was disturbing you."

"No, Effie, it was not dittoness that stopped you from asking; it was a bit of unconscious reasoning," said Phil, springing the phrase on her cautiously.

"You argued with yourself that if you had been disturbing me, I should have taken myself off to my room."

"But you never asked me to play," said Effie, a little inconsequently.

"You might have refused. One never knows how to take you."

"That means you can never tell whether I'm going to be nasty," said Effie ruffling.

"Or nice," added Phil; "and I had to protect myself. I should have felt so hurt at the other thing."

Effie's great eyes became greater. "Would you?" she asked. "I never dreamed you noticed anything I said or did."

"As much as what other people said or did!"

"Only as much?" asked Effie anxiously.

"Well, a bit more. I don't mind telling you, now that we aren't going to see so much of each other."

"No," said Effie regretfully, continuing with more

cheerfulness: "but, of course, there are holidays—vacations, you call them, don't you?"

"I don't know about the vacations," said Phil, quite gruffly.

"What d'you mean you don't know?"

Before Phil could answer, descending footsteps informed them of the return of the three letter-writers.

"What shall we do about the—the conspiracy?" asked Effie hurriedly. "Shall I tell?"

"I wouldn't; at least, it will pay Aunt better if you don't."

"How's that?"

"Because now we'll have to love her harder to make up for the wrong we've done her."

There was a harshness in Phil's tone that struck Effie as strange and unnecessary; but before she could investigate its cause, Dulcie had bounded into the room, followed, more leisurely, by the two others.

"Don't look so anxious, Effie," said Dulcie; "we didn't forget to mention you."

Effie shrugged her shoulders ungratefully. Having disposed of the "conspiracy" question, her mind had reverted to Phil's mysterious hint anent the vacations. She remembered that he owed her an answer; but whatever it might be, she would have to claim it on a future occasion, for Mrs. Duveen pointed warningly to the lateness of the hour. To the surprise of everybody, Effie submitted without the customary skirmish for an extension of time, and only Phil guessed the truth: this was the first item in her scheme of reparation.

The departure of the two girls was followed at no long interval by that of Uncle Bram.

"I'd like to pat you on the head," he said at parting, to Phil; "but I suppose you would consider that an insult—so here's instead."

Phil's fingers closed cordially over the extended hand of the other, so cordially that Uncle Bram could not forbear to repeat once more, this time half in earnest, a boast he had formulated some time ago jestingly:

"Your masters may have taught you a lot of Latin and Greek, but I have taught you a thing which is quite as valuable in life—how to shake hands properly. So long, boy."

When Phil came back into the room he found Mrs. Duveen comfortably ensconced in an arm-chair.

"What, going to make a late night of it, Aunt?" he said with a gaiety that sounded forced.

"Well, we have a rather important point to settle," replied Mrs. Duveen, "and we may as well get done with it as soon as possible. I mean, of course, your allowance at Cambridge."

Phil's eyes dropped, and he had to clear his throat before he replied: "No, Aunt, that matter is all settled. My sizarship is worth a hundred a year, and then I shall have a leaving exhibit of sixty from the school."

"Yes, I know," said Mrs. Duveen unsuspectingly, "because I have enquired. It can be done on one hundred and sixty, and less, perhaps, but there is absolutely no reason why you should stint yourself. Above all, I am anxious that you should get the full benefit of the social side of the University life. And that costs money."

"Still I shall manage all right on what I've got of

my own," said Phil with a curious persistence. Mrs. Duveen looked at him in wonder.

"I don't understand you, Phil," she said helplessly. Phil returned her glance very steadily as he replied:

"Let me explain, Aunt. I don't think it's right of me to accept your help now that I can stand by myself. You can easily find a better object for the money you want to spend on me. If I took it, I might perhaps be robbing somebody else."

Mrs. Duveen's hands moved nervously in her lap; her mouth was very tense. "I think you are right, Phil," she replied quietly. "No doubt it will be to your advantage to start as early as possible training yourself in habits of independence. I am sorry—I ought to have thought of it before."

"Well, you see, Aunt," said Phil eagerly, "it never struck me till the other day when I went to see Leuw and mother in the new home. You don't know what Leuw has done; he has simply done wonders, all single-handed, or nearly all. It has made a man of him, too."

"Yes, I dare say he's a good example to follow," said Mrs. Duveen, yet more quietly than before—almost in a whisper.

"It will help me tremendously to know I've got nothing to expect from anybody but myself," resumed Phil quite buoyantly. "Of course, the first few vacations they will have to keep me on trust. . ."

Mrs. Duveen sat up as though stung. "Keep you on trust? Who?"

"I forgot," said Phil in confusion. "I ought to have told you that when I come back to town I intend to live at mother's."

Beyond paling a little, Mrs. Duveen showed unmoved as she said:

"Yes, you ought certainly to do that."

Phil kept silent, disconcerted at the ease with which he had won what he had looked forward to as a hard-fought struggle.

"It would be bad for you to remain in surroundings that will remind you of a time when you did not expect everything from yourself," added Mrs. Duveen gently.

Phil started. So the fight was not yet over; perhaps it was only beginning. At any rate, he had his first wound.

"Don't think me ungrateful," he said humbly; "I shall never forget what you have done for me."

"This isn't a question of gratitude," replied Mrs. Duveen with apparent calm; "it is a mere matter of exchange. You have given me good value in return for anything I may have done for you. During the six years you stayed under my roof you added greatly to my happiness. You made me forget the afflictions I have suffered more easily than I should have done otherwise, and at best I could only look upon you as a loan, never as a gift. There has always been a tacit contract between us that the arrangement should terminate as soon as one or the other of us grew tired of it. I could guarantee for myself, but I was ever ready for the moment, which had to come sooner or later, when your heart would drag you back to your own people, when you would resent the attempt of a stranger to filch a tithe of the affection you ought to bestow elsewhere without discount or deduction. No, Phil, I repeat that no consideration of gratitude ought

to make you waver in your decision. I admit cheerfully the balance of advantage was on my side."

Phil was nonplussed; Mrs. Duveen's attitude was so foreign to that which he thought natural in her under the circumstances.

Greatly to his surprise, he felt something like anger steal over him.

"There, wasn't I right?" he said almost bitterly. "I only mention the idea of my leaving you, and you show yourself perfectly satisfied; you don't make the slightest effort to keep me back. Why, you simply seem to jump at the chance of getting rid of me."

Mrs. Duveen's face flushed slightly—hope had breathed upon it. She was meeting an extreme situation with extreme measures, and it seemed she had achieved something already.

"My dear Phil," she said with an uncertain smile, "if this were only a ruse of yours to test my appreciation of you, I should have seen through it and answered differently. But you have made it too plain that you regard your relationship to me as a yoke, and then you expect me to give away my pride by asking you to go on wearing it. When all is over between us, I want you to think of me with respect."

The words were measured and dispassionate—not even the sharpest ear could have detected the heartbeats that pulsed furiously behind them. Phil stared before him in baffled bewilderment. What was he to do now? He wanted her to remonstrate, to oppose his project tooth and nail, so that he might have an opportunity for arguing and convincing—not her, but himself, that he was right. But above this unquestioning acquiescence of hers, the inmost voice

of his conscience rang out with terrible distinctness. It did not flatter him; it dwarfed what he had dignified with the name of a great and noble resolution into its true proportions as an act of ignoble thoughtlessness. That surely, it told him, was not the stuff self-reliance was made of. True manliness did not consist in trampling down, but in stooping lovingly over obligations that held up silently appealing hands. And that was what galled him most. She did not want his gratitude; nay, rather than humble herself by accepting it, she pretended that she owed him thanks. And then his heart spake out, and asked him why he had brought upon it the agony of cold words that cut like knives, from lips whose merest breath had healed and comforted, had wafted the balm of tender solicitude. There was only one way of putting an end to such questions, and he took it.

"No, Aunt," he said, coming close to her and speaking fiercely, "you ought not to have asked me to stay. You ought not to have said a single word; you should just have pointed with your finger to the door."

"I don't know whether I should have done it dramatically enough, and besides—you might not have understood," replied Mrs. Duveen, smiling tremulously.

"For heaven's sake, Aunt, don't smile at me, or you'll make me blubber, and I could never forgive you for that. Why should you smile at me? For wanting to throw you away like an old glove and telling you of it as unconcernedly as if I were asking you to pass the mustard? Oh, Aunt, if you would only say to me, 'Phil, you little cad,' I should consider it the highest compliment you've ever paid me."

"No, I can't flatter you so much as that," said Mrs. Duveen, still smiling despite Phil's protest; "but I'll make a compromise and say: Phil, you five foot ten and a half inches of stupidity, don't you see that all this had to come one day or another? In fact, I should have been disappointed if it hadn't; I may almost say alarmed. You are only passing through your phase of discontent and revolt, like all men of normal constitution; in your case it comes a little earlier, but then you always were precocious. But you can hardly be held responsible for whatever shape the outbreak may assume."

Phil bit his lip gloomily. "That's right," he said, his eyes downcast, "go on making apologies for me. Why don't you say straightway I have behaved like a saint and a gentleman? But I'll tell you what my 'outbreak'—it sounds quite nice like that—has done for me, and it couldn't have done anything better: it knocked me off my little pedestal with a crash. Of course, you didn't notice I was getting as conceited as Lucifer—you never do notice anything about me that you can't make a copy-book text out of. I was getting to think myself such a decent and a self-righteous fellow that with a little more thinking I should have grown into the awfulest prig that ever defiled God's earth. You see? Some good is sure to come out of anything you are mixed up with."

"Hush, Phil," said Mrs. Duveen, wan and haggard, for the strain had told terribly. "You must forget all about it. If you think you owe me an apology, I will let you off with what you just said."

"But you will admit that I have more cause to be grateful to you than you to me," demanded Phil, almost threateningly.

"Why should I want your gratitude when I have you?" came the fearless reply.

The first thing, next morning, Effie got Phil into a corner, and heckled him as to what he meant by his reference to the vacations.

"Not much," replied Phil; "only, like most boys, I thought I could grow into a man overnight."

CHAPTER XVIII

THERE are probably few men or women so meek and lowly-minded but have, at one time or another in their existence, felt themselves the hub of the universe, if only for a minute, an hour, a day. With Mrs. Diamond, whom even her best friend could not accuse of being meek and humble-minded, the sensation lasted for a week, to wit, the eight days dating between the receipt of Mrs. Duveen's acceptance and the actual occasion to which it referred. It really showed remarkably well for her powers of endurance that she survived fancying herself for all that time the very essence of things cosmic. Contemporary occurrences of every shade and size, floods, earthquakes, wars that changed the geography of the earth, the overthrow of cabinets, phenomena physical and metaphysical, became merged and centred within a circumference that could be measured by inches, and she took it all smilingly. Hardly smilingly, though, for the bull-dog, don't-stop-me-I'm-in-a-hurry expression with which she shouldered her way through her errands would have made the Himalayas open a tunnel for her. Having long ago convinced herself that no one could do things half so well as herself, she jealously usurped every item of preparation, except the most menial tasks, in the execution of which she kept a Cerberus eye on Mrs. Saffron, who had succeeded Mrs. Lipcott as her familiar spirit-in-ordinary. Any offer of assistance from sympathetic neighbors was gruffly

refused as a shameless device to put in a claim for an invitation; and the affair—Mrs. Diamond could not repeat it sufficiently often for her gratification—was to be strictly select. Of course, the one who suffered most severely under this order of things was Mr. Diamond. He felt as in a city under military law; the strictness of régime made him almost afraid to breathe, and smoking had been interdicted as a matter of course. When he came home from work, tired and hungry, his wife set before him, instead of the greatly-desired dinner, some novel idea that had struck her during his absence, and on which he had to expend his last remaining strength in mustering up a fictitious admiration. He could not sit down without being trodden on; he could not stand up without being swept from one room into another; and yet any suggestion of his to “go across the way” was strongly resented, because, as Mrs. Diamond once told him under great provocation, she did not see the reason why she should nigger herself to death while he went about gallivanting; or—thus she corrected herself in a tenderer moment, just after Mr. Diamond had handed her the five pound note by which she exceeded her original estimate—because she wished him to be on the spot at all available times in case there was any occasion to appeal to his judgment. And Mr. Diamond swallowed the barefaced fiction, fervently desiring that it were a plump veal chop instead.

But, although he tremblingly refrained from any attempt at initiative, all mistakes of commission and omission were promptly put down to his account. Thus, for instance, in the midst of an amiable discussion—of course, it was really a monologue—on the

desirability of engaging a professional pianist for the evening, Mrs. Diamond's brows suddenly contracted with a jerk that made her husband hold tight to his chair.

"And now you've forgotten somebody, Diamond," she said, eyeing him with disfavor.

"I dare say I have," said Mr. Diamond, anxiously accommodating, "but I had an idea you had thought of everybody we could think of."

"Then what about the Lipcotts?"

"Quite right, Becky, my dear. It'll be nice for Phil to meet them."

"Very nice. And that's enough reason for you to waste two extra suppers, eh? Oh! you clever man. Now listen, the way I look at it is this. That boy Leuw, who you thought was going to turn out such a blackguard . . ."

"I thought?"

"You thought," iterated Mrs. Diamond, and the argument proceeded no further. "That boy Leuw is going to be somebody one of these days, and if we don't get in with him while he isn't, it's a chance lost. Dear! dear! Diamond, when will you learn to see further than your nose?"

So it came that the Lipcotts were asked to the "select affair;" and Leuw, on being told so by his mother, laughingly declared that they had now received their patent of nobility, and the least they could do to show their appreciation of the unexpected compliment was to adopt the invitation card as a coat-of-arms.

It always struck Mrs. Diamond regretfully, when in after times her memory harked back to the matter,

that, out of the very abundance of her opportunity, she had neglected to taste, to the fullest, the exhilaration of those great days. It seemed to her a shocking waste of good material. For example, she ought to have thrilled considerably more on seeing in the columns of the "Jewish Examiner"—she could spell printed matter painfully—among the list of Bridegrooms of the Law for the various Synagogues, the name of Mr. Lazarus Diamond. She remembered having noticed with great satisfaction—but not with sufficiently great satisfaction—that the lengthy nomenclature of Mr. Diamond's Synagogue had necessitated a lapping over of the line, which in a way made him stand out distinct and prominent among the other figurants in the list. She blamed herself for not having tried hard enough to imagine how the "Mr." would have looked with the addition of an "s," by which she would have come within easy distance of realizing the great ambition of her life—that of having her name chronicled in the public press. There was, however, one incident which she never divulged, and the memory of which she laboriously thrust from her mind. This was a certain interview with the editor of the above "Examiner," in the course of which she had suggested that a reporter should be lodged in her house for the day, in order to take full and accurate notes of the proceedings, to which suggestion the editor had courteously replied that he did not think the occasion of sufficient communal interest, but that he would have much pleasure—he thoughtfully did not say profit—in inserting a home-made account at the usual advertisement rates.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon of the day of

days. The warden's box, the bouquets, the laudatory preamble, the procession of the Scrolls—all the glory and triumphs of the Synagogue ceremonial were things of the past. Mr. and Mrs. Diamond were seated at what they anachronically called breakfast—alone. The “alone” implies a bold departure from custom, which only a person of Mrs. Diamond's standing and strength of mind dared permit herself. For she had relegated the spread, by which the Bridegroom of the Law is expected to signalize his office immediately after the morning service, to the evening program—converting into additional prestige for herself an act of prudent economy, by the explanation that she had to do so out of compliment to certain high-placed friends of hers, who had expressed a strong desire to do her honor by their presence at the function.

“I don't know how you can eat so heartily—I couldn't touch a thing,” said Mrs. Diamond.

“I'm very sorry, Becky, my dear,” said Mr. Diamond, leaving it doubtful whether he was expressing regret at the greatness of his own appetite or the smallness of his wife's.

“Not that I say you don't deserve a good breakfast,” continued the latter; “you went through it all beautifully.”

“Thank you, Becky, my dear,” said Mr. Diamond, a little half-heartedly. He had hungered for many a day for a word of praise from his wife, and now that it had come it sounded as if it were addressed to a performing dog.

“I do hope the evening will go off all right, and the Duveens will come down in their carriage,” remarked Mrs. Diamond with piously folded hands.

Mr. Diamond professed to echo the wish by sighing as he loaded another fried sole on to his plate.

"Now hurry up with that, because you've got to—you know what. I'll just go into the kitchen and look after Mrs. Saffron."

And Mrs. Diamond swept out of the room with a rustling and a crackling of her new dress of stiff brocade, which gave one the idea that she would momentarily burst into flame. The "you-know-what" must have been something distinctly unpleasant; for it killed the last vestiges of Mr. Diamond's appetite so completely that, by the time he had half finished his sole, he fancied he was eating his way through a whale. As a matter of fact, the reference was to the speech which Mr. Diamond had composed, at the dictation of his wife, and to the delivery of which in the evening he looked forward as the most terrible ordeal of his life. Yesterday he was nearly word-perfect, and now he dreaded approaching it again, for fear of finding that the excitement of the morning had unraveled the laboriously stitched seams of his memory. With a groan, the burden of which he divided impartially between his speech, his wife, and his Bridegroomship of the Law, he walked to the chiffonier, took out the manuscript, and began to zig-zag the room in the achieving of his desperate task; and each time he passed the arm-chair, which yawned at him its soft-cushioned enticements, he did not know whether to call himself martyr or hero.

An hour after, Mrs. Diamond came back and took him in hand for rehearsal. She knew the speech from beginning to end, only from hearing him read it twelve times—a fact she pointed out to him in proof

of what the human mind can do if backed by a little intelligence; only she did not put it so nicely. Mr. Diamond got on much better than he had expected, perhaps because his wife played upon his receptiveness by endearing phrases like:

"Diamond, if you disgrace me to-night, I shall get a divorce!"

About four o'clock a merciful diversion arrived in the shape of Mr. and Mrs. Preager, followed immediately after by Mr. and Mrs. Tannenbaum. Their early appearance was justified in the first place by the intimacy of their acquaintance with the givers of the feast, and secondly, by their having obliged with the loan of cutlery and crockery, in recompense for which they thought themselves entitled to a fair length of start in the sampling of the good things provided. But perhaps it was only a fit of absent-mindedness that made Mrs. Preager help herself to the almonds and raisins with one hand while untying her bonnet with the other. Mrs. Tannenbaum, however, showed herself possessed of superior method.

"I can see who arranged the table like that, Becky," she insinuated delicately.

Mrs. Diamond accepted the tribute to her artistic instinct with becoming silence, while Mrs. Tannenbaum felt herself impelled, by the intensity of her admiration, to take stock of the individual beauties of the table and to improve her favorable impression of sight by that of taste. Thus she could, in all decency, run the gamut of delicacies, from cheese-cakes to Spanish olives and back again.

"Now let me have a good look at you Becky," she continued. "I didn't have a chance of it in the Syna-

gogue because—well, I don't care who knows it—because I simply couldn't take my eyes off your Lazarus."

"Did you hear that, Mr. Tannenbaum?" exclaimed Mrs. Diamond, skilfully mingling mock indignation and delight in her voice.

"I did, but it's no use her trying; she can't make me jealous," replied Mr. Tannenbaum genially. "My best respects, Mrs. Diamond."

"You'll never get me to believe you only paid three and six a yard for that brocade," broke in Mrs. Preager austere.

The idea of Sadie Tannenbaum, with her fifty-five years on that dumpy back of hers, carrying on a flirtation with her husband over the heads of self-respecting folks!

"May I spend in doctor's bills anything it cost me more. I must say, though, it was only a remnant," admitted Mrs. Diamond.

"And the cut of it," observed Mrs. Tannenbaum, cheerfully ignorant of being credited with a dumpy back. "It looks, well, it looks for all the world as if it had been photographed on to you."

Mrs. Diamond contemplated with great complacency as much of herself as her eye could take in.

"And so comfortable, too," she said. "Fancy wearing a dress for the first time and feeling as if you had never worn anything else—you understand what I mean." Then her voice fell as she continued: "But joking apart, my dears, I did feel proud of him to-day. I never had an idea he was really such a fine figure of a man."

"I don't know how it was," said Mrs. Tannenbaum

thoughtfully, "but one minute he reminded me of Tannenbaum and the next of the Prince of Wales."

"You don't say so, Sadie," exclaimed Mrs. Diamond, almost aghast.

Mrs. Tannenbaum affirmed that she certainly did say so, and what was more, she meant it. Possibly she did, though the possibility dwindled to a mere shadow in the light of certain confidences exchanged earlier in the day between Mrs. Preager and Mrs. Tannenbaum. From these it was to be gathered that Mr. Diamond's bearing in the warden's box and in the procession was that of a dyspeptic coal-heaver, while "Becky's" dress was enough to throw the tailoring trade of all England into disrepute.

"How much a quart did you pay for that cherry-brandy, Becky?" asked Mrs. Preager innocently.

"Never mind as long as it's paid for," replied Mrs. Diamond, taking the hint and filling three glasses.

"At your house, in joy," said Mrs. Tannenbaum to Mrs. Preager, to which Mrs. Diamond added: "And may it be soon."

Mrs. Preager sighed and sipped at her glass, sighed and sipped again. Of course, she understood the particular drift of the toast. She was the mother of six marriageable daughters, and was likely to remain so.

"Don't fret so much, Julie," said Mrs. Tannenbaum consolingly; "everybody can't have the luck, like myself and Becky, to be mother-in-laws before we got over our surprise at being mothers. You know how scarce young men are."

"Scarce?" asked Mrs. Preager with a sneer. "The trouble is there's too many of 'em. That's what makes the girls pick and choose nowadays. When we

were young, we weren't half so hard to please, were we, Sadie?"

"Speak for yourself, if you don't mind," replied Mrs. Tannenbaum, icily.

Mrs. Diamond saw it was necessary to pour oil on the troubled waters betimes. "And then, some girls are much too fond of their home to leave it," she said.

"My girls certainly have as good a home as they can wish for," said Mrs. Preager with dignity.

"Perhaps you mean that mine hadn't," suggested Mrs. Tannenbaum, bridling.

"There, mention a tail and the devil thinks you are speaking of his," quoted Mrs. Preager.

"Will you have something else, Sadie?" asked the hostess to change the subject.

"Yes, Beckie—I'll have my mantle and bonnet, if you please."

"Nonsense, Sadie," ejaculated Mrs. Diamond.

"My mantle and bonnet, *if* you please," iterated Mrs. Tannenbaum very loudly, pitching her voice in the direction of her husband. "Izzy, we are going. Don't forget your umbrella, like you always do."

"What's the matter, my darling?" enquired Mr. Tannenbaum, rising in great perturbation and coming over to the ladies. He hoped sincerely his ears had deceived him; the Diamonds were really doing the thing handsomely—threepenny cigars and all. He had made up his mind to stop till he had smoked a dozen of them, and here he was only half way through his first. Meantime Mrs. Tannenbaum was explaining to him what the matter was; simultaneously Mrs. Preager did the same to Mr. Preager, and Mrs. Diamond to Mr. Diamond. After that each

of the six turned on the remaining five to put the case from a strictly unprejudiced point of view; and as no one contradicted the other, all considered themselves admittedly in the right, and this effectually smoothed the way for mediation. As a matter of fact, nobody, except Mr. Tannenbaum, who was for a moment demoralized by the great issues at stake, had felt the slightest apprehension as to the ultimate outcome of the occurrence, which precedent had shorn of all significance. The only one genuinely affected was the cherry-brandy; for, having been the primary cause of the collision, it was only right, on the homœopathic principle, that it should be made to act as peace-maker. The three gentlemen settled back to their discussion, which, after naturally dwelling for some little time on the uncertainty of the feminine temperament, reverted at length to its staple topic—communal politics.

"I'm going to propose at the next Committee Meeting that the prayer for the Royal Family should be said all in English," remarked Mr. Preager, who was notorious for the heterodoxy of his views.

"Why not propose to have an organ in the Synagogue? That would make more noise," replied Mr. Tannenbaum, with overt sarcasm.

"Or that the ladies should sit downstairs with the men—then there would be still more noise," added Mr. Diamond, hazarding a deeper thrust.

"You may sneer," said Mr. Preager, not the least bit disconcerted, "but I know what I am talking about. You remember, of course, we had a policeman at the Synagogue entrance last night to keep the place from getting too crowded." Messrs. Diamond and Tannenbaum remembered.

"Well, later on in the evening, I was standing outside my door when he passes on his round. 'How did you like our service, officer?' I says to him. 'Oh! all right,' he says, 'only what do you want to drag the Queen in for, and call her names in that break-jaw lingo of yours?' Of course, I explained to him that we were praying for her Majesty's long life, and he answers it didn't sound like it and walks off, winking his eye and saying he belonged to the police and not the marines." Mr. Preager stopped in order to let his words filter into the minds of his listeners, who were evidently impressed.

"Now, why should we lay ourselves open to a risk like that?" continued Mr. Preager, striking while the iron was hot. "Instead of getting the credit we deserve for our loyalty, we may find ourselves one fine day had up for high treason."

"It never struck me the thing could be made to look so serious," confessed Mr. Diamond, genuinely concerned.

"Nor me," echoed Mr. Tannenbaum.

"But what is to be done?" went on Mr. Diamond. "You know the trouble we had to teach our Reader to say the few words in English. 'Our gracious Majesty' took him a week; 'Albert Edward' a fortnight; 'the Princess of Wales' a month; and 'all the Royal Family' he can't say to this day."

Mr. Preager pretended to give the difficulty his serious consideration; then he lifted his head high, on the impulse of a sudden idea, as it were.

"But why should he recite it at all?" he enquired. "If it comes to that, I don't mind doing it myself."

Mr. Diamond exchanged a quick glance with Mr.

Tannenbaum. There it was—the cloven hoof. Mr. Preager had not been half subtle enough. It was known that his pet hobby consisted in usurping the functions of the Reader on every possible occasion. Unfortunately for him, this happened also to be the pet hobby of Mr. Diamond and Mr. Tannenbaum, as well as of every member of the congregation. It arose from the aboriginal human instinct to attain to prominence; and the elevation of the Reader's desk went some little way towards it.

"In any case I've been a seatholder longer than you, so where do you come in?" asked Mr. Diamond.

"And I only wish to remark that I'm senior to both of you," came from Mr. Tannenbaum.

"Yes, but don't you think I deserve something for the suggestion?" submitted Mr. Preager suavely. "Now, what if I hadn't found out from the policeman . . ."

"Are you quite sure you didn't dream that policeman?" broadly hinted Mr. Tannenbaum.

"I beg your pardon, Tannenbaum," remarked Mr. Preager stiffly, but coloring up to his ears.

"I didn't mean anything of the sort," apologized Tannenbaum vaguely. "Only you know your memory goes wrong sometimes. How do I know? Well, one week-day at the beginning of this year I came into the Synagogue, and found you were reading prayers, because, you said, it was the anniversary of your mother's death. Three months after, you were reading prayers again, and again it was your mother's anniversary. I wished you long life and said nothing. A fortnight ago you read again, and for the third time it was your mother. Now, either you had

three mothers, or your one mother died three separate times, which is a thing that doesn't usually happen. You see, all I want to show is that you can't always trust your memory. I don't mean anything else, God forbid."

"Then in plain English you call me a—a confudler," said Mr. Preager with great apparent self-control.

"There you go again," replied Mr. Tannenbaum, quite hurt. "Now just to show that I don't suspect you in the least, I'll call in evidence. I say, Mrs. Preager, did a constable talk to your husband last night at your door?"

"Certainly not," replied Mrs. Preager, vehemently indignant at what she considered an aspersion. "How could he be standing at the door when he was fast asleep on the dining-room couch all the evening?"

Mr. Tannenbaum said nothing, but turned on Mr. Preager in smiling enquiry.

The latter, however, instead of collapsing, returned Tannenbaum's glance frankly and unabashed.

"Well, I'm glad I only dreamt it," he said, knocking the ash off his cigar. "I wouldn't have had it happen for all the money in the world. Julie, we must get that couch upholstered. It's so hard and skinny that it gave me the nightmare last night. I tell you, Tannenbaum, it's a weight off my mind that we can keep the prayer in Hebrew."

Mr. Preager remained master of the difficult situation he had created for himself owing to the arrival of more guests; and once the start had been made, the inflow continued steadily, till the capacious draw-

ing-room—Mrs. Diamond objected to having it called a parlor—felt it could do with a little bulging. But, despite the fact, Mrs. Diamond endeavored to keep a tolerably free space near the top of the table; in which endeavor she was loyally assisted by Mrs. Preager and Mrs. Tannenbaum, who were only glad of an opportunity to display their authority as second-in-command. The arrivals which, for the time being, attracted most attention were Mrs. Lipcott and Leuw. Mrs. Tannenbaum and Mrs. Preager had thought it worth quite a long consultation on the attitude to be adopted towards one who, though originally of equal standing, had for years occupied a menial and subordinate position; and they had decided on a bearing which was to be affable and courteous, yet containing a dash of patronage and condescension. But somehow the sight of her stalwart and self-possessed son robbed them of the courage of acting up to their intention, and the effusive greeting which Mrs. Lipcott met with from them made her face and heart glow with the comforting assurance of having come into her own again.

The festival proper was over an hour ago. Mrs. Diamond calculated that Mrs. Duveen would start immediately on its termination, which ought to bring her down to the house—by carriage of course—somewhere about seven. It was already half past; Mrs. Diamond began to grow fidgety. Desperately her hearing reached out for the sound of carriage wheels, till the constant strain brought on an hallucination that threatened to defeat its own ends. Everything seemed to merge into the rumble of carriage wheels—the buzz of conversation, the clink of the glasses,

Mrs. Tannenbaum's screech-laugh—the whole world seemed to find articulation in carriage wheels; the reserved space near the top of the table alone kept a considerate, intelligent silence. It was impossible for Mrs. Diamond to get to the windows without causing a widespread disarrangement, so that she was deprived even of the luxury of a reconnoitering peep; and though she flattered herself that she was keeping her pre-occupation carefully under cover, she once distinctly caught Mrs. Preager and Mrs. Tannenbaum whispering together and glancing at her in a manner which could only lend itself to one interpretation. It was this which induced her to abandon her project of stealing down to the street door and to despatch Mrs. Saffron instead as scout.

Five minutes later Mrs. Saffron thrust her head through the door and beckoned violently. Mrs. Diamond flew towards her.

"They're coming," panted Mrs. Saffron in a whisper.

"In the carriage?" panted back Mrs. Diamond.

"No, walking. Here they're coming up the staircase, all the five of 'em."

Mrs. Diamond felt that a great hole had been torn in her triumph. But she recovered herself quickly. The next best thing to having the Duveens with their carriage was to have the Duveens without it.

"Oh, you are late, Mrs. Duveen," she said, loud enough for everyone to hear. She would have given a week's salary could she have said, "Rose, dear," instead of "Mrs. Duveen." But she made up for it by rapturously kissing Dulcie and Effie. Effie, however, somewhat spoilt the effect by unceremoniously drawing her handkerchief across her mouth.

The entrance of the Duveen party created enough commotion to satisfy even Mrs. Diamond. Only a chosen few were vouchsafed an introduction to "my dear friend, Mrs. Duveen," and Mrs. Tannenbaum debated whether there was reasonable room for offense at Mrs. Preager's name being mentioned before her own.

Mrs. Duveen did not feel at all comfortable under the very pronounced scrutiny that assailed her from every side, and acknowledged her new acquaintances with a perfunctory politeness, which was at once characterized as stuck-uppishness. Uncle Bram's bluff, rollicking manner made a much more favorable impression.

Mrs. Diamond's eyes traveled about anxiously to collect facial evidence of opinion. Mrs. Tannenbaum sent her a wink, which was meant to convey to Mrs. Diamond congratulations on her taste in the selection of her friends.

"Not much for that lot," said Mrs. Tannenbaum simultaneously to Mrs. Preager. "Just look at her dress. I wouldn't be seen cleaning my doorstep in it."

"And not a shilling's worth of jewelry anywhere," commented Mrs. Preager in turn.

"They came down by 'bus, Julie," was Mrs. Tannenbaum's solemn apostrophe. "I don't believe in that carriage. I always had my suspicions about it. You know what Becky is."

Mrs. Preager nodded her assent, for one could not be discreet enough in a matter so highly treasonable. But Mrs. Diamond would not have been the least bit offended had she overheard them; it would rather

have added to her satisfaction, knowing how triumphantly she would be able to give the lie to their calumnies later on. For Mrs. Duveen had just whispered to her certain information which redeemed the great disappointment of the evening utterly. She at once went off to give Mrs. Saffron the necessary instructions.

Phil was pleasurably surprised at finding himself in the company of Leuw and his mother. At Mrs. Duveen's special request room was made next to her for Mrs. Lipcott. The two women had met occasionally, for Mrs. Duveen had made a point of calling on Phil's mother whenever time allowed it, during her errands of charity to the East End. On none of these occasions, however, had she met Leuw, and therefore she did not recognize him now until Phil came up with him.

"You have been treating us very badly," she said smilingly. That was as far as she got, for here Mrs. Diamond returned and monopolized her.

"It's very hot, but it's awfully jolly, don't you think so?" said Effie to Dulcie, who had preferred keeping outside the enclosure. "I've never seen such a lot of queer people together in my life. I'll laugh outright if that woman keeps on wobbling her feather-crest."

"Don't make fun of them," reproved Dulcie.

"Why not? They won't mind, because they won't know."

"It isn't right, though. We are all Jews and Jewesses here, you and I and everyone of us."

"Well, that's exactly why I am inclined to see the joke of it. If there were any Christians here, do you know what I would do?"

"Well, what?"

"I should put on my solemnest face, and make them believe that no respectable woman ought to go to a party without feathers in her hair."

"And keep on wobbling them," added Dulcie.

"Just so," laughed Effie. "Still, on second consideration, some of us look quite nice. See that neat, quiet-faced woman next to Auntie?"

"I think that must be Phil's mother," said Dulcie. "I can't be sure, because I haven't seen her since the time we fetched Phil away; and I suspect she didn't look her ordinary self that day."

"I dare say she didn't," agreed Effie. "By the way, who is that Phil is talking to?"

"His brother," came Dulcie's rather abrupt reply. Then she turned suddenly, afraid lest Effie should ask her how she knew.

"Oh, that's Leuw, is it? I like him," was Effie's prompt criticism.

"Do you?" asked Dulcie indifferently.

"And I beg his pardon," continued Effie.

Dulcie looked astonished. "What for?" she asked. "You couldn't possibly ever have offended him."

"Yes, I did, without his knowing it. Don't you remember I said he would look like a cobbler's boy?"

"Don't you think he does?"

"Dulcie, haven't you got eyes? No cobbler's boy could disguise himself so well to look like a gentleman. If Phil doesn't bring him over soon, I'll go up and introduce myself—look, Dulcie, here they come."

But Dulcie did not look; her eyes sought a different direction; she hardly knew why, or if she did, she

would not admit it to herself. It had been a great surprise to her that she was able to recognize "the boy who shouted" after so many years, almost at first glance. She had done so, not from the likeness to Phil, which could be faintly traced, but because of the honest look in his eyes which had from the very first given her the strong desire to make friends with him; she would have known him by it had the interval been three times as long. No, he certainly did not look as if he had stayed away so obstinately for fear of disgracing Phil; his appearance suggested nothing obviously discreditable. So he had kept aloof out of sheer indifference. Dulcie remembered having prayed that it should rather be this latter than any other reason. And now that she knew her prayer had been fulfilled—well, it made her glance the other way as she saw him approach.

And the next moment she heard him saying to her: "You don't remember me, do you?"

"Oh, yes, I do," said Dulcie readily. She would not pay him the compliment of troubling to fence with her answer.

"It's a long time since we met," continued Leuw lamely.

"Is it?"

"So long that it almost seems as if we hadn't met at all."

"Really, I haven't thought about it," said Dulcie. But she had the grace to blush at her untruth.

"I never fancied that you had."

The words no doubt were meant to sound neutral, but Dulcie's quick ear detected a ring of provocation, and Leuw's mien bore out her suspicion of it. It made her feel strangely pleased and conciliatory.

"But I might have thought about it, if I had had an idea we were going to meet again," she said frankly.

Leuw's face cleared. "You see, accidents will happen," he jested.

"And it seems you were quite satisfied to leave it to accident," Dulcie was about to say when she was cut short by Phil, who came up and introduced Effie. Leuw looked at her with much interest. Effie was well-known to him from Phil's numerous references to her doings and misdoings; and as he scanned her laughing eyes and mischievous mouth, he wondered he had not heard more of the misdoings. His scrutiny, too, gave him an opportunity of judging whether laughing eyes and mischievous mouths were superior to eyes earnest and sober, with perhaps a dash of sadness in them, and lips that puckered a little primly; and he had no difficulty in deciding that the superiority lay with the latter.

Meantime, as might be expected, the mischievous mouth was having most of the say, speeding quip and sally and contributing much to the enjoyment of the hour. Leuw greatly surprised and delighted Phil by the ease wherewith he stood that severest test of a man's self-possession—the showing himself at home in the company of strange women, of whatever growth. It gave him some idea how hard Leuw must have butted against the world to have had his corners knocked off so completely. The fear that it might be otherwise had given Phil many a moment of apprehension. He had often anticipated the time when he and Leuw would meet on the same platform of life, and he writhed at the thought that he would put his

elder brother to the blush by his superiority of "form." That danger was happily done with. As to the petty social politenesses, Phil had himself played tutor to Leuw, and Leuw had acquired them with an aptitude only natural in a man whose brains had enabled him at nineteen to furnish a house on his own earnings.

"May I get you anything, sir?" said a voice at Phil's ear, startling him out of his reflections.

"What, is that you, Yel—I mean Joe?"

"Yes, sir," said Yellow Joe. "I'm here on the odd job, helpin' to wait, sir."

"Don't you know who I am?"

"I know who you used to be, sir," replied Yellow Joe.

"Then what on earth, man, are you 'sirring' me for? Tip us your hand, old pard," said Phil, purposely breaking into the language of old times.

Yellow Joe did so eagerly. "I didn't know but what you wouldn't be puttin' on 'gyver' to a poor bloke like me," he said wistfully.

"What, after we played buttons together, Joe?" exclaimed Phil, almost indignant.

"Say Yellow Joe, and then I'll know you ain't kiddin'."

Smilingly Phil complied. "I'm awfully sorry your father's paralyzed arm isn't getting better."

"How do you know?" asked Yellow Joe, astonished.

"Leuw told me. Do you think I've never enquired after you?"

"Wish he had told me."

"Why?"

"I'd have been glad to know you hadn't forgotten me. I thought of you many a time; wondered what was becomin' of you." He paused and, as it were, took stock of Phil. "No, Phil, I ain't jealous of you. You deserved your luck; you always was a good sort."

"Married yet—engaged?" asked Phil, to give the talk a lighter turn.

Yellow Joe looked scornful. "Catch me wastin' my time on that kind of tommy rot. Tell you, got my hands full to keep the show goin' at home, with eight of 'em, one smaller than the other and father incurable. But if you think I'm sniveling, you're jolly well mistaken, because I ain't."

"I didn't think you were—I wouldn't insult you like that," said Phil soberly. "If I did what you are doing, I'd simply reek of conceit."

"Keep up your penmanship and figures, Joe," quietly interjected Leuw, who had overheard the tail end of the conversation.

"I'm keepin' 'em up," said Yellow Joe quite fiercely, and then calming down, he turned appealingly to Phil. "He's driving me crazy with it. Every time he meets me it's 'Joe, keep up your penmanship and figures.' And when I ask him what for, he says, 'I'll tell you next time.' Leuw, when's next time?"

"Not this time," laughed Leuw.

Just then Yellow Joe caught the hostess' watchful look, and dived away without another word. Phil gazed after him thoughtfully. His talk with Yellow Joe had enabled him to realize a vague, impalpable sense of satisfaction which had tantalized him by its elusiveness; he had now fully grasped it, its essence,

its origin. For the first time to-night, for many years, he was rubbing shoulders with the associations of his youth. He had lived in a world so alien to them that he might well have felt afraid that the re-approachment would partake more of the nature of a collision; but it had gone off without a shock, without a single vibration of repugnance. Of course, he loved his people; but perhaps he only loved them as an abstract, elemental thing of which he formed a materialized particle, so that his love was sheer egoism. Here, however, he was dealing with them, not as a cold, far-off generality, but as warm, palpitating atoms of life, thrusting themselves bodily upon his physical and mental ken; and he knew it needed no undue strain on his part to bring himself to make apology for their foibles, to extenuate their weaknesses, to shed tears of joy at their most commonplace virtues. And, moreover, he remembered that he was putting his affections to their most crucial test. The people around him to-night were, mostly, if not all, the representatives of a smug parochial prosperity; they were not the lowly and destitute, whose faces were in themselves letters of credit, traced in lines of care, on the fund of fraternal sympathy. Oh! these lowly and destitute ones! His compassion for them swelled into a very paroxysm. If only he were already a man; if only he had already at least one foot in the stirrup of his career, how he would come among them, stepping, as it were, out of the darkness, which they thought could beget nothing but more misery, on his lips a loud-voiced evangel, in his right hand the flag of salvation. This was his dream, one of his dreams. He did not know—or it would have glad-

dened him unspeakably—that his brother Leuw had forestalled him in the conception of it years and years ago.

“Look at Dinah Lipcott’s second,” said Mrs. Preager, nudging Mrs. Tannenbaum. “I’m sure he’s got something the matter with him—see his mouth twitch just then?”

“I don’t care what’s the matter with him, I know what’s the matter with me,” replied Mrs. Tannenbaum wrathfully. “Did you ever see such arrangements? Half-past nine and not a smell of supper. I’ll faint in a minute.”

“Strikes me, after all the fuss it’ll be only sandwiches,” said Mrs. Preager gloomily.

“Then, what did she want to bother me with lending her my knives and forks?” snapped Mrs. Tannenbaum.

“To kid us into fancying something, I suppose.”

“Still, the breakfast-room’s locked,” went on Mrs. Tannenbaum: “I tried the handle before coming in here.”

Mrs. Tannenbaum’s optimism was brilliantly vindicated, for just then Mrs. Diamond, acting on a signal from Mrs. Saffron, which she in turn passed on to Mr. Diamond, arose and shrilled through the babel:

“Ladies, please take your gentlemen in to supper.”

This inversion of the formula must not be taken as internal evidence that Mrs. Diamond was a champion of woman’s rights. In reality, it was due to nothing save her rather flurried condition. But possibly her confusion was construed into an anxiety as to the seating capacity of the breakfast-room, which was known to be limited; this alone could account for the

fact that the transit thither could hardly be said to accord with the dignity of the occasion. In real truth it was a scramble, almost a scuffle. Mrs. Tannenbaum got her bead trimmings entangled on somebody's waistcoat buttons, and elbowed herself and Mr. Tannenbaum into place, deluging everybody near with showers of jet. The lady of the feathers could never find out exactly what had become of them; true, she fancied that she saw a bit of them floating in her left-hand neighbor's soup, but even that did not conclusively prove to her that they had become absorbed into the bill of fare.

The Duveens—unlike Mrs. Lipcott and Leuw, who were more prepared for it—at first watched the rush with the consternation due to a panic, and afterwards, when they divined the true nature of it, with an amusement which they tried in vain to conceal from Mrs. Diamond's agonized eye. Owing chiefly to Leuw's forethought, they had kept out of the stampede, and now Mrs. Diamond, having reduced the chaos beyond to a semblance of order, came back and with apologetic references to "those sort of people, you understand what I mean," entreated them to take seats "strictly reserved, mind you," at the supper table. Mrs. Duveen and the rest of them struggled hard to resist, but under Mrs. Diamond's indomitable importunateness, re-inforced by the thought of the coming speech, a mule might have succumbed without putting the prestige of its species under a cloud.

Despite the bad beginning, the banquet itself was pronounced a success, with Mrs. Tannenbaum heading the chorus of praise. No one took exception at having periodically to wait for somebody else's knife,

and the scarcity of crockery was hailed by several married couples as a lucky opportunity for demonstrating to the world the good understanding between them by eating from off the same plate.

Mr. and Mrs. Diamond did not eat from the same plate nor from separate plates; neither of them ate at all. Mr. Diamond felt the speech sticking in his throat, from which he augured uneasily that it was not located where it ought to be—in his head. Mrs. Diamond was busy rehearsing to herself, so as to be ready to prompt her husband, should emergency arise. It was apparently a spontaneously happy idea into which, however, he had been carefully drilled by Mrs. Diamond, that made Mr. Preager approach Uncle Bram—Mr. Alexander, as he ought to be more fittingly styled under the circumstances—to propose the toast of the host and hostess. Uncle Bram cheerfully complied, and in a few well-chosen words expressed the pleasure it gave him and his sister to be present on the enjoyable occasion. As an honorary officer of the Synagogue Union he congratulated Mr. Diamond on the public spirit he had shown in accepting an office which, although at some little expense, served to perpetuate the traditions of their race; and in conclusion he wished Mr. and Mrs. Diamond, as well as all the other members of their congregation, every success in this world and the next.

The applause that followed his remarks subsided to an expectant hush, but broke out again with renewed vigor as Mr. Diamond staggered to his feet. Mrs. Tannenbaum afterwards declared that she positively saw his beads of perspiration dripping on to the tablecloth, but Mrs. Preager maintained that they lost

themselves somewhere in the region of his collar. Just before beginning, Mr. Diamond was seen to give a jerk, but only those in the immediate neighborhood could conjecture that the true cause of it was a whispered: "Now, then, Diamond," from his wife.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," said Mr. Diamond. "It affords me and Mrs. Diamond very great pleasure to see you assembled round this hospitable table. We are always pleased to do what we can for our friends, in our humble way, that is, and we hope that none of you have anything to complain of in the way you have been treated here this evening. We don't like to boast, but I dare say you have already observed for yourselves that we are doing the thing in first-rate style, as, thank God, we can well afford to. Specially, we want to thank our very dear friends, Mrs. Duveen and Mr. Alexander, for honoring us with their presence, which, I feel sure, is a thing they would not do for everybody. Now, for what concerns myself, I have always tried my best to be a credit to the community, and, thank God for all mercies, I may say without blushing that my name stands better in the loan offices than many a man with three times my income; from which you can guess that I've had my fair share of helping a friend or two out of a tight hole; and talking of being kind-hearted and helpful reminds me of somebody else who's just made up of that sort of thing; and that's my wife, God bless her. That's all she thinks of from morning to night, including meals. I'd just like to know if there's another woman within an hour's walk from here that subscribes out of her own housekeeping money to three bread-meat-and-coal societies, besides being president

of the Inlying Charity of the Women of Bialostock and a member of the committee of the Free Dispensary, not to mention her making door-to-door collections any time she hears of a specially distressful case." The speech then went on to insist, at some length, on the disinterestedness and honesty of purpose which actuated Mrs. Diamond in her charity work, the details of which her retiring disposition and distaste for praise made her keep a strict secret even from Lady Simmondson, "whom, in a manner of speaking, she might also call her bosom friend after Mrs. Duveen." The remaining sentences discoursed of Mrs. Diamond in a strain which, even though pitched in a much lower key, would have made her appear to the uninitiated listener certainly one of the most remarkable women of her times.

To avoid misunderstanding, let it be clearly stated that this was the speech which Mr. Diamond *ought* to have delivered, but did not. No sooner had he got beyond the introductory "Ladies and Gentlemen," when he became aware that had his life depended on his remembering a single connected sentence of the carefully composed, carefully rehearsed address, he would die a most sudden death. He felt like a man who is walking the plank, and has just come to the end of it. And meantime Becky was inspiring him to eloquence by encouragingly treading on his corns. Mr. Diamond, however, saved the situation by a presence of mind which approached the miraculous. In a moment his hand was tugging frantically at collar and necktie, the whites of his eyes turned up, and presently, after a preliminary oscillation or two, he collapsed heavily into his chair.

"Water, water," shrieked Mrs. Diamond, thoroughly taken in by the ruse, and for once in a way genuinely alarmed about her husband.

Mr. Diamond took good care not to come round too hurriedly, and while Mrs. Diamond was chafing his temples with eau-de-cologne from Mrs. Duveen's scent-bottle, he listened complacently to the sympathetic remarks evoked by his indisposition, which everybody ascribed to an emotion at once natural and becoming. It was only when Uncle Bram urged that a doctor should be sent for that Mr. Diamond pretended to revive. As for a speech, who would expect such a thing from a man obviously returning from the verge of his grave? Mrs. Diamond, too, was not displeased. True, the speech was a pity, but Mrs. Duveen's attentions had been most flattering, and enquiries, whether personal or by letter, after Mr. Diamond's health, could no doubt be turned into a peg for closer relations.

On their return to the drawing-room, Mrs. Duveen, with Dulcie on her arm, chanced for an instant against Leuw.

"You know Phil is leaving for Cambridge the day after to-morrow," Mrs. Duveen said to him, "and it's only right we should give him a send-off—quite private, I mean. Will you come up to-morrow night? I asked your mother, and she said she would leave it to you."

Leuw did not reply immediately. Involuntarily, his glance fell on Dulcie's face; her eyes were already resting on his, silently but unmistakably seconding the invitation.

"Thank you, Mrs. Duveen—I shall be very glad to

come," he said; but somebody else seemed to be replying instead of him.

Uncle Bram was looking solicitously at his watch. "I hope he'll find his way here," he said to Mrs. Duveen.

Mrs. Diamond overheard the remark, and at once hurried off to renew her instructions to Mrs. Saffron. At the same time she started a series of vigorous "ahems," as though to get rid of any possible obstruction in her larynx.

The substantial supper had done its work, and everybody was in excellent humor. Messrs. Preager and Tannenbaum cast coveting glances at the card-table, which stood ignominiously thrust away into a corner, but out of deference to the distinguished guests they gloved their itching fingers with patience.

"I don't suppose they'll stay much longer," they consoled each other.

But it was close on midnight before Mrs. Diamond, who had kept up incessant watch, saw Mrs. Saffron poke her head through the door and nod three times significantly. Mrs. Diamond gave another and final "ahem" that might have passed as an "attention" on any parade ground, ere she came out with:

"Mrs. Duveen, your carriage is waiting for you downstairs."

The effect was electric. In the rush to the windows half a dozen chairs were overturned, and Mrs. Tannenbaum nearly pushed out one of the panes with her nose in her eagerness to get a better view. Yes, there it was right enough. The carriage and pair with the liveried coachman on the box seat.

The commotion did more than the lateness of the

hour in making the Duveen party whittle its farewells down to the narrowest margin of politeness. Mrs. Diamond's eyes; as she stood waiting at the door to pilot them down, nearly set the room on fire with their blaze of triumph.

"To-morrow night, then," said Mrs. Duveen, pressing Leuw's hand. And again Dulcie looked corroboration.

"You will come again soon, won't you?" Mrs. Diamond was heard to shriek from the street. "And remember me kindly to your cousin, Lady Simmondson."

The carriage rolled off, and Mrs. Diamond remained watching it to the bend of the street. As she made her way up the staircase, the steps of which had become metamorphosed into india-rubber, the rapid beat of her heart was the thump of the hammer nailing together the bridge which would eventually span the gulf between herself and the aristocracy of England.

Mrs. Tannenbaum and Mrs. Preager, meantime, while awaiting her return upstairs, were relieving an impotent jealousy by an exchange of comments, heavily saturated with a flavor of sour grapes.

"Yes, he's very nice—is Leuw," summed up Effie, blowing out the night-light, "but he doesn't talk—I couldn't get a word out of him."

"Couldn't you?" yawned Dulcie, nestling more cosily into her pillow. No doubt it was wrong—awfully wrong. But for all that she was very glad that Effie had not been able to get a word out of Leuw. She herself had got several, quite a dozen or more.

CHAPTER XIX

THE next day distinguished itself for Leuw by a certain "dragginess" that was peculiarly its own. Everything had an element of length. The way up to the stock-room was twice as long as usual, the change took longer in counting out, people spoke with irritating slowness. He asked old Christopher if he noticed it as well.

"Can't say I do," replied Christopher, from the birthday arm-chair, where he had now taken to spending most of his time; "but when you've been out late on the spree, it's no wonder things feel a bit leaden next morning."

"I dare say you are right," said Leuw. As a matter of fact, he had neither exerted himself very violently to extract enjoyment from the Diamond festivity, nor had he left late—scarcely two minutes after the Duveens; but he accepted Christopher's explanation, thinking it as good as any he cared to formulate for himself.

"Suppose you let me help you a bit; perhaps things'll go quicker then," suggested Christopher.

"I'll do nothing of the sort," was Leuw's severe reply; "you work as hard as you can at taking it easy."

"You never will let me put a hand to anything now," grumbled old Christopher, but only very softly.

"You've got to consider yourself invalidated. You know yourself invalids aren't permitted at the front. So hurry up and get strong again."

"I'm hurryin' as fast as I can, Leuw, boy; but just as I've made an inch of headway that cough o' mine gives a tug and pulls me back again."

"That's exactly why you should keep quiet, and pretend it's having all its own way; and one fine day, thinking it's finished you up altogether, it'll march itself off, and then you and I will have the laugh of it. See?"

Christopher nodded feebly. He did everything feebly now. He was not even strong enough to notice the child's language in which Leuw had thought fit to converse with him for the last week or two. It had given Leuw a tremendous shock the first time Christopher had answered some simple question of his by a look of blank incomprehension. A feeling of unutterable sadness had stolen over him at the knowledge that the firm of Donaldson & Lipcott now counted one sleeping partner, the nature and degree of whose sleeping—Leuw recoiled from the thought—might at any moment turn out to be something else than what the business idiom implied. At first, too, Leuw had felt a little frightened at the prospect of sole responsibility devolving on him, at having to be the umpire of his own initiative, unqualified by reference to Christopher's sage experience. For Christopher's days of wisdom were irrevocably over. But then Leuw took heart again as he remembered that with each step forward the business had made, so in proportion had his capacities for coping with it increased; and the danger he apprehended was rather that they would grow out of proportion and chafe against the narrowness of their scope. The chief discomfort of it was the physical strain to which he was put; what, how-

ever, made him struggle on alone was the consideration that Christopher would look on the suggestion of keeping a shop-boy or clerk, not as a necessity for the prosperity of the concern, but as an additional sign of his own uselessness. And Leuw was determined to work his arms and legs out of joint sooner than give that kindly, old, pain-riven heart a final pang. And that being so, he once more fell to wondering why, with two men's work on his hands, the day should count twice the ordinary number of minutes to the hour.

He heaved a deep sigh of relief when he saw the clock pointing to seven. Quietly he put up the shutters without giving Christopher any reason for closing an hour earlier. For one thing, it was unnecessary, for Christopher now never took it into his head to ask what the time was. It was quite obvious that he had done with such a thing as time and its difficult and artificial subdivisions.

When Leuw came home, he found his mother already in her state dress, the one she had worn last evening at the Diamond's.

"Won't we be late? It's such a long way, you know," she said anxiously.

"We shall be early enough," replied Leuw, a little pettishly perhaps. But despite his assurance he made such a hurried supper that the greater part of it remained behind on his plate. He went up to his own room at a leisurely pace, but once he had shut the door, he broke into a frantic haste, which resulted in half the desired speed. Of course, the frisky collar-stud had to have its little game of hide-and-seek, and when it was finally captured, Leuw thought unkind

things of the laundry people for starching the button-holes into such obstinacy. And then, when he came down, he found to his surprise that instead of an hour, as he had imagined, the whole proceedings had not taken him twenty minutes.

"Leuw, I feel a trifle nervous—do you?" laughed Mrs. Lipcott, just as they got out into the open.

"Nonsense, mother," replied Leuw. Then he stopped abruptly. "I must run in again for a minute. I've forgotten something; my—handkerchief."

He left his mother waiting outside, and hurried back to his room. In the first place he exchanged the handkerchief he had put in his pocket before for another one, by which he compromised with his conscience for having put his mother off with a pretext. Then he unlocked the little drawer, in which he kept his bank-book, and extracted from it an envelope. This last contained, as he assured himself by a cursory inspection, a scrap of manuscript, the writing of which showed the faintness of age. It was indeed the first communication he had ever received by post; what prompted him to take it with him now when he was going to see the writer of it, was to himself a mystery.

"I wonder which turning it is," said Leuw, as they came out of the station.

"The third on the right," answered Mrs. Lipcott, very pat.

"Is it? How do you know?"

"I think I remember Phil saying so," replied his mother, though with a curious embarrassment, which did not escape Leuw.

"You're right about the turning; now, how about finding the number?" said Leuw.

His difficulty was due to the fact that the houses stood far back fringed in front by a long stretch of garden.

"It's the fifth house on the other side," said Mrs. Lipcott.

"Did Phil tell you?"

"No—yes," vacillated Mrs. Lipcott.

"You've been here before, mother," said Leuw, turning on her quickly.

"Yes, Leuw," admitted Mrs. Lipcott, recovering herself. "I've been here before, four times I believe. But I never went inside."

"Well, then, what made you come here at all?"

"Leuw, can't you understand?"

Leuw thought a moment or two, and then nodded assent silently.

"I couldn't help it," said Mrs. Lipcott deprecatingly. "Sometimes the thought of him grew too strong for me, and then I came up here—after it was dark—and stood outside just to feel him near me even if"

"Where's the need of explaining, mother?" interrupted Leuw. "I told you I understood."

"Thank you, Leuw," said Mrs. Lipcott.

They found Mrs. Duveen, Dulcie, and Phil seated on the window terrace—the evening was very fine—waiting for them. A vote between the sitting-room and a little more of the terrace was easily carried in favor of the latter.

"If you're not too tired, we might take a stroll through the grounds, Leuw," said Phil presently. "Dulcie, you will come too, eh?"

Dulcie's ready acceptance of the suggestion hardly

left Letw the choice of a refusal, even had he felt inclined to refuse, which he did not. He could not quite make it out—the phenomenon disconcerted him somewhat: the moment Dulcie had touched his hand in welcome, the impatience which had haunted him all day had lifted as though by magic. Perhaps now he was going to find out what it all meant.

Without a word Mrs. Duveen watched the trio down the gate-walk; then she moved her chair close to Mrs. Lipcott's.

"I am very glad we have an opportunity for five minutes' quiet talk," she said, sinking her voice rather unnecessarily, because the others were far out of ear-shot. "I had hardly hoped we should get it so easily, and I was already casting about for a stratagem."

"What, is it anything so very special you have to say?" smiled Mrs. Lipcott.

"Yes, very special," said Mrs. Duveen, evidently much in earnest. "It is nothing less than to ask your forgiveness."

"My forgiveness?"

"I did you a great wrong in taking your son away from you; still that is so long ago that I may fairly claim that time has made good my trespass. The wrong I want you to forgive I committed only a few days back."

"Why, surely—you really don't mean—I don't understand you," faltered Mrs. Lipcott helplessly.

"You will soon," said Mrs. Duveen, her hand closing very tightly over that of her listener. "Mrs. Lipcott, the truth is that a few days ago I robbed you of your son a second time. No, listen. The night Phil returned from Cambridge he told me he had made

up his mind to go back to you. He said—not in so many words—that he had eaten the bread of charity long enough, that his relationship to me was undermining his sense of manliness. It may have been that, but no doubt it was a good deal more. It was blood calling to blood; the old ties were asserting themselves again—he wanted his mother—his real mother, not the imitation one I have been to him. No, please, let me talk. What did I do? I was false to the spirit of true womanhood, and combated his natural, honorable feelings by every wile and guile I could think of; and I succeeded in chaining him down again. For the time being I felt myself justified in using any measures, no matter to whom I might be dealing hurt and heart-ache. I was jealous, insensately jealous. But, thank God, I have come back to my right mind; I want to get even with my conscience—I want to get even with you, my dear friend.”

“I did not know he was coming back—I never expected it,” murmured Mrs. Lipcott half to herself.

“That only makes my offense greater,” said Mrs. Duveen eagerly. “I was taking an unfair advantage. If you had known that his intention was such, you would have done your best to strengthen it, and made it hold out against all the trickery I mustered up. And now I want you to show me your forgiveness—by taking him back. I dare not tell him of the conclusion I have come to; it would puzzle him, or make him think I was playing fast and loose with him, and he will hate me. You can easily set right my blunder. Just say to him: ‘Phil, come,’ and he will come.”

Mrs. Lipcott felt the slight figure next to her quiver from head to foot.

"But you want to keep him yourself," she said.

"No, I don't want to keep him," cried Mrs. Duveen; "I want to be able to look you and everybody else in the face."

Mrs. Lipcott was silent. Gradually, as though by the growing force of contact, she felt a shiver tingle down her back. But no, it was not that; she had ample cause of her own for trembling. She had been set face to face with an unexpected temptation, and she did not know how she would come through it. It was a terrible thing to have her heart's desire placed within easy reach of her and to feel that before she might snatch at it, she must hustle her conscience to one side. To have Phil back again? Her head whirled. To have him back for good and all, and to be done with the agony of empty longing, which had hounded her forth, on the cold winter nights, haply to get a glimpse of him, and assure herself that she really did have a son Phil, whom she had handed over, of her own free will, to another woman. . . . And here was this other woman pretending that she was eager to restore him, and pretending very badly, for with every syllable of hers she had cried out in protest against being taken at her word. The question that put itself to Mrs. Lipcott was, which of the two was more fit for making sacrifice, which of the two was more cunning in the art of resignation. And undoubtedly the answer to that question was—herself. Well, then, in God's name . . .

"No, Mrs. Duveen," she said tremulously, "you blame yourself too much. You were right in doing your best to keep him with you. You have earned him."

"Don't try to justify me in spite of myself, Mrs. Lipcott. The only favor you can do me is to accept my apology and to tell Phil that we have talked the matter over, and we have come to see that . . ."

"But we have not talked the matter over," said Mrs. Lipcott.

"Well, then, I must go through my confession again," replied Mrs. Duveen, a little wearily.

"No, what I mean is that you have put your side of the case. I have said nothing yet."

"But there is no need for it, my dear. What is the use of putting your side? I admit everything beforehand."

"In that case, Mrs. Duveen, Phil stays with you."

"Stays with me? Well, then, in heaven's name, what are you going to say?"

Mrs. Lipcott set her teeth firmly before replying—somehow it steadied her voice. "Only that I, too, have a conscience, and that my conscience tells me that your claims to him are quite as great as mine. And that's why it is better things should keep as they are. After all, it was surely nothing but a boy's fancy."

"Do you really think it was nothing else?" asked Mrs. Duveen wistfully.

"I am certain of it," said Mrs. Lipcott, with a silent thanksgiving that she was convinced of the contrary.

"Even if it was," mused Mrs. Duveen, "I can't understand a mother being so strong."

"All Jewish mothers are strong," said Mrs. Lipcott; "you, too, although you may not know it yourself. I think we all learnt the lesson from Hannah—you know whom I mean, the one who saw all her

seven sons mangled to death, one after another, and helped them to die painlessly, by smiling on them all the time. I've read her story over and over again; but, thank God, mine is a very different one to hers."

"In the sadness of it only; in the heroism you rank equal," said Mrs. Duveen very softly.

Whether Mrs. Lipcott did not quite catch the remark, or whether she desired to clinch the matter so as to cut off all retreat for herself, at any rate her voice was quite matter-of-fact as she said:

"So that is settled?"

"No, not quite settled," replied Mrs. Duveen, chokingly; "something else remains to be done."

She took Mrs. Lipcott's hands in her own, and pressed them convulsively as she peered hard through the gloom into the dim outlines of the face before her. Then with a gasp that was more a sob, she whispered:

"Dinah!"

Mrs. Lipcott understood at once: "Rose," she whispered back.

With that the two were in each other's arms, sealing their compact of sisterhood in the time-honored fashion which women have.

From along the gate-walk had come at intervals the sound of merry laughter—Dulcie's fresh and silvery, Phil's full and sonorous, both punctuated occasionally by a kind of good-humored grunt, which could only belong to Leuw. They were indulging in reminiscences of last night, and Mrs. Diamond would no doubt have been considerably chagrined, had she known that the humorous side was uppermost.

"Pity Effie isn't down with us," said Phil tentatively. "Won't you go and call her, Dulcie?"

"If I do, I'll have to do it through the key-hole, because the door's locked. You know she won't be interrupted when she's practicing."

"Well, then, let's go into the garden," suggested Phil as an alternative.

"But it's so dark there—we won't be able to see anything," objected Dulcie.

"More fun that—having to feel our way," laughed Phil.

"And suppose I bang my head against the arbor?" said Dulcie merrily.

"So much the worse for the arbor," teased Phil.

A "wretch!" and a slap from Dulcie were the punishment of the offender.

"This way," said Phil, "and let's keep close together. I do hope we won't get mixed up in this Egypt."

"I'm going to hold tight to you, Phil," said Dulcie.

"We're mixed up already," said Leuw; "you've got hold of my arm instead of Phil's."

"Oh!" said Dulcie, letting go hastily.

"Don't you think mine will do instead, though?" asked Leuw in a tone which he hoped sounded facetious.

Dulcie was about to be agitated by qualms of propriety, but she quickly repented. Why, Phil's brother . . .

"But you must promise not to lose me," she said.

Leuw, however, forgot to promise, because he was much too busy enjoying the contact of her arm. He was altogether in a forgetful mood to-night. The darkness, or whatever else it was, seemed to have washed from his mind all the things of which he as a

rule was most painfully conscious—his anxiety about Christopher, the worries of the business, the fatigue of the day's toiling. But chiefly he had forgotten himself. The Leuw he used to know, whose soul was nothing but an impatient straining toward the goal his resolution had set up for him immovably, was hardly recognizable in this other Leuw who ambled airily, irresponsibly, through a mystic fairy-land, not knowing where the path led to, not caring whether it led to anywhere. But he more than suspected who the guide was that led him such devious ways; indeed it was the only certainty he possessed at present. To him Phil's jesting admonition about not getting "mixed up" was a warning to be taken seriously. So he knew that he would untangle himself sooner or later; but—oh, how he wished it might be later!

Inch by inch almost they crept forward along one of the side walks, keeping close to the wall.

"Oh! Phil," cried Dulcie suddenly, "I think I've trodden something dead—a mimosa, I believe."

"Have you? Never mind; we shan't prosecute you for murder," said Phil drily.

Dulcie expressed her indignation at his callousness by addressing Leuw: "If you had sniggered just then, I wouldn't have let you hold my arm another second."

Leuw said nothing, but felt very glad for having "just then" communed with himself so earnestly as not to have overheard Phil's attempt at wit.

A yard or two further on there was another exclamation from Dulcie.

"What's the matter now?" asked Phil unsympathetically.

"I've got my hair caught in a creeper—wait a bit; there, I am loose again."

"That's right; pretend to be Absalom," chuckled Phil. "I believe he was left hanging to his tree for killing mimosas—what do you say, Leuw?"

"I'm going back," cried Dulcie, ruffled as to her temper as well as her hair.

"No, you won't," said Phil sternly; "we're going to make the round of this garden—if we all hang for it."

After a little demur, which was obviously artificial, Dulcie consented to proceed.

"I say, Leuw, we'd have given something for this place in the old days, eh? What sort for playing Red Indians?" asked Phil.

"Yes, it seems grand for prowling," replied Leuw.

"Oh! yes, a fine lot of prowling you'd have done here," said Dulcie scornfully. "If old Rackham—that's our gardener—had caught you at it—he'd have scalped you with his pruning knife."

Phil had stopped; more by the sound of his movements than by sight, for the night though calm and clear was very dark, they perceived he was reconnoitering.

"What are you going to do?" asked Dulcie.

"Find out where we are. Do you know?"

"We've passed the arbor . . ."

"Without knocking it over luckily," interjected Phil.

"And ought to be somewhere near the shrubbery."

"I happen to think otherwise, Dulcie. I've got a horrible suspicion we've got into the chrysanthemums."



"I'M GOING TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH NOW," SAID DULCIE
RESOLUTELY.

"There, what did I say? I told you not to go off the path. Mother'll be awfully angry if we do any damage to them."

"I must admit the chrysanthemums are rather a weak spot with her," said Phil soberly.

"What's to be done?" asked Leuw.

"Perhaps, if we wait a bit, the moon will come out," hazarded Dulcie.

"Nonsense," said Phil, "there won't be any moon to-night. You keep here while I trail back cautiously and fetch a lantern."

The other two listened to the sound of his retreating footsteps as far as their ears could follow them.

"This is a tremendously big garden, you know," said Dulcie at last; "and the dark makes it look twice as big."

"Don't you feel frightened?" asked Leuw.

"What should I be frightened about?" answered Dulcie astonished.

"Oh! nothing; only it's so dark, you see," faltered Leuw.

"I know what you mean," said Dulcie after a pause. "You mean stopping here with you."

"And considering I'm little more than a stranger," added Leuw.

"Not so much as you think," came from Dulcie, almost involuntarily.

"Not so much as I think?" echoed Leuw.

"I'm going to tell you the truth now," said Dulcie resolutely; "it's easier in the dark. If it was always dark, I think people wouldn't tell each other lies. Do you remember I pretended last night I didn't know how long it was since we met last?"

"I didn't know you were only pretending," said Leuw, his heart in his mouth.

"I did. I knew exactly how long it was; and—I was very angry that it was so long. Did Phil never give you any messages?"

"He gave me several; only I thought he made them up himself."

"No, they came from me right enough. That shows I thought about you sometimes, doesn't it?"

Leuw nodded, forgetting that the gesture was an absurdity under the circumstances.

"Doesn't it?" insisted Dulcie.

"Yes."

"Oh, I'm going to tell you everything," went on Dulcie, recklessly; "I want to make up for playing the fraud last night. Sometimes, well, more than sometimes, I wondered what was going to become of you. Once or twice I had an idea you might turn out bad—you can never tell with boys, you know; but that was only once or twice. Mostly I felt very hopeful about you. Well, so when I saw you yesterday, I felt at once that you had turned out as I had always pictured to myself you would. That's what I mean by saying you aren't such a stranger to me. Why, I feel as if I had seen you and talked to you every day all these years."

The logic of Dulcie's explanation was perfectly obvious to Leuw's understanding, and from his understanding it passed on to his heart, which seemed to be its real destination, judging from the way it made itself at home there.

"I'm so glad you hoped the best for me," he said humbly, gratefully.

"Are you? Why?"

"Because your hoping perhaps helped me a little towards it."

"Yes, I do think sometimes hoping is nearly as good as praying," mused Dulcie.

"But I'm not going to leave all the truth-telling to you," went on Leuw.

"What, have you been pretending as well?"

"In a sort of way. I knew those messages came from you."

"And that's why you took no notice of them?"

"I refused to come because I wasn't fit to come. I was clumsy and awkward. I didn't know how to wear my clothes properly, I spoke badly, I wasn't your equal. And I was terribly afraid you would find it out, and get disappointed with me, and give me the go-by altogether. I dare say you would have treated me very politely and not have laughed till my back was turned, and perhaps after a while you might have—have tolerated me, but I don't care for the idea of being tolerated. Oh! yes, I've wanted to come ever so much; but the risk was too great."

"You mean to say it wasn't mother you minded, or Uncle Bram, only me?"

"Only you."

"What a pity," said Dulcie regretfully.

"What is?"

"That you didn't explain it all to me long ago. If you had, I could easily have taken care not to get disappointed with you, and have made proper allowances—for—for things. Look what a terrible lot of friendship we have wasted all these years. It's sinful."

"Couldn't we make up for it now, by being friends all the harder?" suggested Leuw.

"Will you do your share of it, though?"

Leuw was silent, casting about for some emphatic rejoinder to assert his willingness. Unconsciously almost his hand slipped into his pocket where reposed the scrap of paper she had sent him long ago, and which he had treasured so assiduously. He had half pulled it out, intending to explain to her what part it might play as evidence, when a streak of light flashed towards them, and Phil sang out:

"Ship ahoy there!"

"Say you will," urged Dulcie, not understanding Leuw's silence.

"Yes, I will," said Leuw quickly, thrusting the envelope back into his pocket. The opportunity had passed. Perhaps there might be another later on in the evening; even if there was not, he had no cause to grumble.

"Now, then, you thieves—no larks. Where are you?" sang out Phil's voice again.

"Here, where you left us," answered Dulcie.

Together with the light streak came a burst of laughter which showed Phil to be accompanied by Effie.

"Ten to one she's laughing at us; I suppose Phil's been telling her of our plight," said Leuw good-humoredly.

"We can afford to let her laugh, eh?" said Dulcie, and Leuw replied with a heartfelt "Yes."

"Cheer up, you wretched castaways—help is coming," jeered Effie; and presently the relief party was upon them.

"Good gracious! don't we all look handsome," continued Effie, referring to the fact that the lantern—

Phil's bicycle lamp—cast a thin trail of light on the ground while leaving their faces in total darkness.

"Jingo!—saved by an inch," said Phil, examining their relative position to the chrysanthemums. "Now for the retreat. Follow me closely all of you. Ahem! I feel like Xenophon and his Ten Thousand."

"Phil, how can you talk shop under these distressing circumstances?" said Effie. "Who, by the way, was this Mr. Xylophon?"

Phil's account of the famous Anabasis made the return journey seem unnecessarily short—unnecessarily for Leuw at least. But he would not give way to the vague dissatisfaction at having soon to share with the world something which in a few brief moments he had come to regard as his own. The folly of it was obvious. And besides he noted that, as soon as they got into the radius of the hall-lamp, Dulcie's first glance was at him, and he was strangely comforted.

Mrs. Duveen and Mrs. Lipcott were just going within. The electroliers inside were sending out a great flood of light through the three ground-floor windows. Leuw took in with astonishment, a kind of dismay almost, the breadth and bulk of the house, which the enveloping gloom had previously shown up as a shadowy outline. Compared to it, his own dwelling off the Mile End Road was a mere child's toy. The feeling that came over him had in it nothing of envy. His dismay was changing to downright alarm. It made him catch his breath like one who was about to plunge into an unseen danger, and has been cautioned not a heart-beat too soon. The huge house lowered down upon him warningly. It put to flight

certain imaginings of his, half-formed and inchoate, and yet leaving a void, such as he would only expect from the effacing of his dearest and most familiar thought. And the worst of it was that he could not make up his mind whether his prevailing mood should be that of sadness or of anger.

"Late Victorian, with a dash of Gothic; I hope you like the style," said Phil at his elbow.

Leuw gave a start, but, recovering himself immediately, forced a laugh. Then, at Phil's suggestion, he followed him up into the hall and thence into the sitting-room with its broad glare of light. But though the brightness did not re-assure Leuw, it at any rate helped him to adjust his emotions. He knew now that the proper feeling under the circumstances was not sadness, but anger—anger against himself for an improvident fool who was coining counterfeit hopes and thinking therewith to bribe off a sure and immutable disappointment.

However, having come to the conclusion that he was a prodigal fool, Leuw, from notions of self-respect, refused to add to his folly and prodigality by wasting the pleasure of the moment. For, indeed, they made a merry company, and Uncle Bram's arrival shortly afterwards did certainly not detract from the animation of the proceedings.

"I'm glad to have this chance of improving our acquaintance," said Uncle Bram on shaking hands with Leuw. "I've heard such a lot about you."

And Mr. Alexander, being despite his bodily bulk a man of prompt action, lost no time in taking stock of Leuw. But he was exceedingly astonished at the keen grasp of affairs Leuw displayed in his

remarks; his knowledge of the questions of the day; his insight into matters commercial and economic.

"How did you get to know all these things?" Mr. Alexander could not forbear asking at last.

"Oh, I keep my eyes and ears open—I mean I read the papers and attend a good many lectures," replied Leuw, with a pleased smile at the implied compliment. He was all the more glad of the good impression he was producing upon Mr. Alexander, because he knew he was doing so almost in spite of himself; he by no means felt at his best. It cost him more than one great effort to prevent his mind and his eyes from wandering to where Dulcie, Phil, and Effie were exercising their joint ingenuity over a new toy puzzle which Uncle Bram had brought with him from the City. Leuw could have solved it in a twinkling; in fact, he had himself stocked the toy heavily. But he also knew that his anxiety to be with them did not arise entirely from a desire to show off his superiority in the matter.

At last, however, Mr. Alexander thought himself in duty bound to transfer his attention to Mrs. Lippcott, and Leuw obtained his release. After that, things went so rapidly that when Leuw shot an apprehensive glance at the mantle-piece clock he had an agreeable thrill of surprise at finding it only half-past ten. As to doubting the *bona fides* of so solid and venerable a concern, Leuw felt it would be nothing short of a positive insult, and so he refrained considerably from comparing it with his own time-piece. They need not leave for an hour.

But an hour is an hour, even when it seems ten minutes, and the London Railway Companies are run

in accordance with chronometric and not emotional regulations. Punctually at half-past eleven Leuw signaled to his mother.

"It's no use, Leuw, there are no more trains to-night," said Phil, smiling at Mrs. Duveen.

Leuw looked blank.

"There's a train at ten to twelve; I enquired," he said.

"So there is, but that went three-quarters of an hour ago; that clock's an hour slow; in fact, I moved it back myself," laughed Phil, delighted at the success of his ruse.

"You see," explained Mrs. Duveen, apologetically. "Phil was so bent on making a long night of it, as he called it, and I had to promise him I wouldn't interfere with his wish."

"I, too, was sworn to silence, or else I should have let my Waterbury speak," joined in Uncle Bram.

"What's to be done, Leuw?" asked Mrs. Lipcott.

"We'll have a cab, mother," said Leuw cheerfully.

"No, you won't, you'll stay here over night, and see me to the station in the morning—that was the idea of the conspiracy," said Phil.

"Mother can stay; I must be at the shop at nine," said Leuw firmly.

And so the arrangement stood. Mrs. Duveen allowed another half hour's grace, and then, with special reference to the two girls and the support of Mrs. Lipcott, she moved that the female contingent should adjourn to rest.

"Call this a late night? A fraud I call it," cried Effie indignantly, while Dulcie looked dumb entreaty.

But Mrs. Duveen's ruling prevailed, as it always did in matters of household routine. Leuw nodded in

polite compliance to Mrs. Duveen, who said something about now that he had broken the ice; he understood her to say that she wished him to come very often, but the actual words he only caught vaguely. That was because there rang in his ears and in his heart the echo of Dulcie's "good-night," to which she had added half timorously the word "Leuw." It came to him as a revelation how wonderfully soft and musical his name could be made to sound.

"Now that you will have to cab it anyhow, you may as well stay on a bit," said Phil.

"Yes, do," urged Uncle Bram; and Leuw readily consented. He had an idea that for the present he was not fit company for himself.

The talk at first was somewhat desultory, drifting lightly here and there, until, half at Uncle Bram's suggestion, Leuw brought it to anchor with an account of his career to date. Uncle Bram followed him with unmistakable interest, as did Phil, to whom Leuw's doings were always instinct with the zest of romance. No wonder, for to the student, to whom books are the world, it is the realities of life that take the shape of fairy tales. And Phil's pride in his adventurous brother waxed boundlessly, although the latter's unusual communicativeness surprised him not a little. Leuw could have explained it by a desire to stand well in the eyes of Dulcie's uncle, an explanation which would have sounded perfectly natural; but Leuw himself might have felt considerably at a loss, had he been asked to trace that desire back to its first beginnings.

Uncle Bram seemed to have an inkling that he was being treated exceptionally, as his next words showed.

"Thank you, Mr. Lipcott, for having made me your confidant. I feel honored and delighted. I won't say that my belief in my brothers-in-faith has ever been materially shaken, but it is just as well that it should occasionally get a spoonful of tonic, and you have been as good as a whole bottle. You see, we oldsters have a long way to look back, and only a little way to look forward—no further than to the rising generation. We haven't half as much time as we should like in which to do our duty to the future of our race; and that is why we are so pleased each time we get an assurance that at least our immediate successors will safeguard our traditions. Only the sceptic or the faint-heart will ask for more than that. As long as we are sure of you, we may, in the natural order of things, be sure of those who will in their turn take your places. And so link will follow link, until our destiny, or God's purpose in us, will have been accomplished."

Uncle Bram's voice had sunk reverently; his last words might have been the cadence of a prayer.

"I understand you, Mr. Alexander," said Leuw, regarding him steadily.

"You may wonder at the importance I attach to you," continued Mr. Alexander more briskly. "I have good reason for it. I am not often mistaken in my estimates, and I consider you have in you the makings of a worker, a worker of the most valuable sort, because you have *lived* what we others have but observed. We should be to you what the *dilettante* is to the professional. But don't hurry; grow ripe at your leisure; you have still your own field to plough. In the meantime, do you know what I should like to

do with you? I should like to bind you down by an affidavit, a moral one, of course, that when you hear the call, within you or without, you will answer it and not give precedence to other interests. It is perhaps an impertinence of me. I shan't be offended at your saying so."

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Alexander, I don't want to be bound down to it," answered Leuw.

Mr. Alexander smiled. "I can guess the sense in which you want me to take that. I am nothing but an old bungler for wishing to rob you of the credit of the initiative. Forgive and forget my mistake."

Shortly afterwards the conference broke up. Uncle Bram retired to the bedroom which was ever at his disposal. Leuw and Phil stood at the street door, clasping each other's hand firmly. For a minute neither spoke.

"I'm not going to say good-by, Leuw," remarked Phil at last; "it's all right as a sentiment, but as a word it sounds too formidable."

Leuw nodded. "You mean we aren't really parting from one another."

"No, and never shall," said Phil; "you will be going your way and I mine, but I shall always feel as if I should only have to stretch out my arm in order to tap you on the shoulder."

"And you may be sure that I shall stop and turn, whatever may be my errand," replied Leuw.

"I'm glad it's you who are leaving the house, not I," smiled Phil.

"What do you mean?" queried Leuw, not catching his drift.

"Don't you remember it's the privilege of the one

who stops behind to call after the outgoing one: 'The Lord bless and preserve you?' " replied Phil, repeating the old formula in its Hebrew setting.

" You've certainly got an unfair advantage, but I'll be even with you one of these days," smiled Leuw. And with that he went.

A few yards down the road he was hailed from a passing hansom with the customary " Cab, sir? " Leuw answered with a ringing " No, thanks," and hurried on. The idea of riding when he had so much to walk out of himself! He felt much more inclined to " take two cabs and run between," which he and his mates used to advise each other in the old days was a healthy way of getting home from anywhere.

The sky had preserved the same hue of solid inkiness which had necessitated the halt at the chrysanthemums. Leuw was halting there once more; he was again listening to Dulcie's offer of friendship. Now he could puzzle it out at his convenience. He knew what friendship meant; Christopher had taught him that. But the sober, reasoning attachment that drew him to the old man contained none of the responsiveness wherewith he strained towards this girl-woman. That was instinct with an involuntary yearning for affinity which he could not explain by any rule or rote of argument, which robbed him of all the self-knowledge to which he had so laboriously attained. What was going to be its development? This was what he must make up his mind on—and quickly. He could not say that he had nothing to guide him. There was the warning that had been borne in upon him at sight of the great house—the warning, corroborated by his wondering survey of the grandly ap-

pointed chamber, which had awed him the whole evening with its air of quiet, unconscious magnificence. The couch whereon he had sat had forced upon him comparison with the hard-ribbed, horse-hair sofa in his own home, the sofa which was intended for the crowning glory of the newly acquired furniture, and which now was the first support that gave way in the fabric of his pride. There had grown up in him a sense of difference, of distance; he felt that in having got rid of his awkwardness in speech and manner he had done but the least part to set him on a plane with the girl who wanted his friendship. So then there he must stop; it was madness to think further, to feel further. He must husband the energy of heart he was willing to lavish and add it instead to his muscle, his brain; he must forge ahead till the difference was bridged, until the distance lay behind, until . . .

He had got eastward of the Bank. Past him lumbered heavy drays, drawn by patient, way-sure horses, while the drivers huddled snoring on their box-seats. They were bringing the produce of the fields to be devoured by the dwellers of the town. Ah, what a hungry, ravenous city it was! God help the one that got into its clutches, and did not prove too tough a morsel for its maw. Leuw almost laughed; it would find him tough enough; it would break its teeth on him—Leuw Lipcott was no vegetable-marrow.

A little way on he passed the East London meat-market. Dozens of men were already hard at work loading the carcasses of sheep and bullocks on to the hurdle wagons that were to distribute them to the dealers. Leuw could distinguish between the beasts that had been pole-axed and those which had been

killed according to the Mosaic rite. The former had about them a look of uncanny starkness, symbolic of the rebellious spirit in which they had submitted to their fate. The latter—Leuw felt conscious of the curiousness of his fancy—showed calm and resigned in their death. Leuw remembered reading about the furious controversies which, especially on the Continent, raged concerning the merits and demerits of the Mosaic method. It seemed to him that his observation might almost constitute a serious contribution to the question.

On and on he strode. Near the great Assembly Hall, where his brethren were wont to worship in their thousands on the High Festivals, he met a group of wedding-guests trudging wearily home, the men limp and wan, the women, white-shawled, looking like so many ghosts in the gathering dawn. Ghosts? Leuw drew himself up taut, as though in protest against the suggestion. His life contained no spectres; it was all morning, the essence of daylight. It flashed through his soul the radiance of hope; it undulated in his pulses with billows of youth and strength; his heart cried out lustily. The future was his, and the future held everything.

CHAPTER XX

"THIS is Thursday, ain't it, Leuw?" enquired old Christopher towards the evening of the next day but one.

"Quite right," replied Leuw joyfully, for Christopher's question betokened a more accurate count of time than he had been capable of lately, and hence a return towards a normal condition. But Leuw was speedily disillusioned.

"How do you think I know?" went on Christopher, with a cunning smile. "How do you think I know?"

He dived into his pocket and fetched out a stick, some three inches in length, notched at intervals.

"Now, look here, Leuw. I know there's seven days to the week. Every morning I cut a notch into this here stick o' wood, and when there's seven notches, then it's Thursday again. Now you can guess why I want it to be Thursday."

Of course Leuw could guess. According to an arrangement, which was almost a contract, and dated back to the very commencement of their partnership, Leuw and Christopher spent their Thursday evenings together.

Before the old man's breakdown this had, as a rule, meant a visit to one of the East End theatres, with Christopher defraying all expenses; but now they took it quietly, chatting away in the workshop-parlor till eleven or even later. For Leuw tried to delay as long as possible the wistful look Christopher gave him at

parting, and which sometimes haunted him throughout the night. It came back to him now.

"It's no use, Christopher," he said almost sternly. "You'll have to give in and live at home with us."

"No, Leuw," said Christopher with the stubbornness of old age, "not yet, at least. I'd be making a bad bargain over the deal. You see, here I've got you with me the whole day; suppose I was livin' at your place, I'd only be with you an hour or two of an evening and perhaps not that, because it'll be poor fun for an able-bodied chap to mope along of a tumble-down old carcass like me. And for another thing," he went on, forestalling Leuw's remonstrance, "I've somehow got an idea as once I leave this here shop, I'll never set foot in it again. And this here shop, you must know, is the oldest pal I've got, seein' as it's grown old along o' me. And that would finish me off quicker nor ~~everything~~."

Leuw did not have the heart to press his point, because the old man evidently meant what he said.

"I want to ask you something," began Christopher, as Leuw came in after putting up the shutters outside, and proceeded straightway to set the kettle on the hob. "Are you good at telling dreams?"

"Can't say I ever went in for the thing," replied Leuw.

"D'you know why? Because o' late I've taken to dreamin' o' Syd Mitchell."

"Well, you couldn't dream of anybody better, while you're at it," remarked Leuw busily.

"I dare say I couldn't; but," Christopher shook his head disapprovingly, "he's gettin' a bit of a nuisance, is Solly Myers. There he comes at nights and sits

by the side o' my bed, tellin' me yarns about the old times when we laid under canvas together, holdin' on to the tent-pegs for fear the wind should whisk it off. . . . Well, and what's the upshot of it? Last night, when he didn't turn up as usual, I goes out to find him, all the way to Kingdom come, and there he stands at the door, and says he, 'Crixey,' says he, 'you're late—we thought you'd deserted.' 'We?' says I, 'Yes,' says he, 'the whole company's up here, captain and all, only he's a general now; hurry up, we're just goin' to fall in; there goes the bugle, d'you hear?' And just then I catches a sound, more like drummin' than tootlin', and same time I feels icy cold all over, and a hand chokes me by the throat; and then I wakes up and finds myself standin' in the fender with the fire-tongs across my toes . . ."

A terrible burst of coughing stopped Christopher's narrative, which had dragged itself thus far with many a break and jerk and gasp. Quickly Leuw held up the glass, for which the palsied old hand was blindly fumbling. •

"If you say another word to-night, I'll go straight home," he threatened when the attack was over.

"I'm all right now, Leuw," replied Christopher, "it never comes on but once of a night. And the talkin' don't hurt. I sits here jabberin' to myself like a monkey the whole evenin', whether or no."

Leuw did not reply, partly to set Christopher a good example, and partly because at that moment the resolution, which had been ripening in his mind all day, attained full growth. He, however, decided on not imparting it to Christopher till the morrow.

The old man seemed right. His complaint had had

its way, and for the time being, it appeared, was content to rest on its laurels. Christopher appreciated the relief, and lay back in his chair smiling almost happily on Leuw.

"I'm going to read you the paper," said the latter. "There's trouble again on the Indian frontier."

Christopher acquiesced eagerly, and Leuw set to work on the penny paper which he purchased unfailingly every morning on his way to the shop; it made him feel every inch a City man. Steadily he read on, until, casting a casual glance at Christopher, he saw him leaning back with eyes closed. Leuw continued, sinking his voice by degrees so as not to come to an abrupt stop, which might have startled the old man. But Christopher was not dozing, and divining Leuw's intent, sat up quite wide-awake.

"No, no," he said, half in protest, half in apology. "I was only thinkin' about something else."

"I dare say you've had enough of this," smiled Leuw, folding up his paper; "but mind—no speeches."

"Well, I don't know exactly how many words it'll take me to say it in, but I'll cut it short to please you. And perhaps I oughtn't to mention it at all."

"Why not?"

"Because it's something about your people."

"Then out with it, by all means," said Leuw jauntily. "We invite criticism, you know."

"Seems to me," said Christopher slowly, "you're jolly well stocked with most things, you Hebrew folk, but you're very short in one."

"And that is?"

"Sol Myerses, by your leave."

Leuw paused in the act of giving his paper a final smooth, and looked intently at Christopher.

"Very short, indeed," repeated the latter. "My idea would be to keep a few of 'em, say a hundred thousand or so, stored up ready to send out in a brace of shakes just wherever one o' you are gettin' jumped on. If that don't stop the jumpin' on, I don't know what will."

Leuw smiled indulgently at Christopher's fancy.

"It's very good of you to trouble about us," he said, "but you don't quite understand the situation."

Christopher looked disappointed.

"So you don't think it would work?" he asked.

"Not exactly the way you mean," replied Leuw soberly. "But there's a good deal in what you say all the same."

"I thought I wasn't drivelin'. You know, Leuw, I'm feeling' clear in the head to-night, something wonderful."

And Christopher burst into a hoarse laugh, the sound of which did not at all accord with his vaunted clear-headedness. It set Leuw trembling.

"What's the joke now?" he asked, outwardly calm.

"Thinkin' of how the boys thought Syd Mitchell a bit of a wizard all along o' the way he ferreted out the liquor for 'em—that was one o' the things he reminded me of the night before last."

"Ferreted out the liquor? Where? when?"

Christopher gave a few more gurgles ere he proceeded:

"We'd been trampin' it through the snow all day, bein' quartered at night, me and him and six more of us, in a little dram-shop; but hanged if we could find

dram or drop or anything but empty bottles, and we wanted a drink, you bet. Jingo! how we wanted a drink. And each time one of us went near to ask her, she snarled and clawed at us . . ."

"Who did?"

"Why, didn't I tell you?" said Christopher fretfully. "She'd been left behind all alone by mistake like—couldn't have been more'n sixteen, and a regular wildcat spitfire, the prettiest thing in petticoats I'd seen since we left Plymouth harbor. Says Syd Mitchell: 'Boys, give me fightin' room!' And, bless me, ten minutes after, the grog was steamin' our noses off."

"Did he tell you how he managed it?" queried Leuw eagerly.

"That he did; it all came out with the rest of him that night before Inkerman. Seemingly he spotted by the looks of her that she was one of his own lot, and he up and talks to her in her own lingo, and kids her that we was sent specially to take all the Jews to Palestine, and that he was King Solomon come to life again, and if she'd show him where they'd hidden the stuff, he'd make her his queen as soon as he had a little spare time. No wonder they made him out a wizard . . ."

The broad grin on Christopher's face changed to an agonized look, and he wildly clutched the ledges of his chair. So he remained a full minute, with Leuw staring at him helplessly, and then the spasm was over. But Christopher took the hint.

"I think I'll turn in early for once," he said bravely; "and since you're here, you might as well give me a hand-up."

When Leuw came out of the bedroom, he pretended to obey Christopher's strict injunction to go straight home, by descending and slamming the shop door from the inside. Then, taking off his boots, he crept up the staircase, and sat on the top step keeping his sick-watch. Quarter after quarter chimed from the neighboring church clock, until at half-past one Leuw could no longer master the thought of his mother's probable anxiety. The breathing from the other side came heavy, yet measured and regular. Leuw deemed he could safely leave his post. After all, in another few hours he could dispose of this terrible responsibility. Inch by inch he stole down, and let himself out noiselessly.

The next morning he was early at the shop and not alone; Mrs. Lipcott came with him. As Leuw turned the key in the door, his lips framed into a smile at the jest wherewith he intended to greet the invalid:

"Christopher, my mother's downstairs to kidnap you."

But it was with no smile that he came bounding down again.

"Mother, there's a doctor ten doors up on the other side," he gasped.

"You go—I'll see to him upstairs," said Mrs. Lipcott.

But Leuw pushed her out without another word; if he went, it might save ten seconds, but the spectacle upstairs was not fit for a woman. Even the doctor thought so as he locked the bedroom door on himself and Leuw.

Christopher died hard. It took him the greater part of the forenoon to struggle through the Valley

of the Shadow, until the light from Beyond came to meet him, and woke his numbed brain into a last flicker of thought. He smiled wanly as he caught sight of Leuw standing close to the bed with hard-set face.

"In at the death, eh, Leuw?" he whispered. "Now, then, while there's time. I've got a favor to ask you: I want you to let this here shop die with me—that'll sort of give me a pal on the journey, but what's more, it's your own good I'm thinkin' of; you'll know what I mean. Thank you, Leuw, for—hullo, what's this, reveillé already? Syd, boy, hurry up with that there pipe-clay—hurry—hurry . . ."

And by an irony of fate Christopher Donaldson, who had always taken life leisurely, died with the word of haste on his lips.

Never had the loneliness, which had been the old man's portion, stood out so glaringly as when it came to paying him the last honors on earth. Leuw found there was absolutely no one to share with him the mourning coach in which he followed the hearse to the suburban Presbyterian cemetery, where Christopher had some ten years ago purchased the grave on the strength of which he used jestingly to call himself a landed proprietor. Mrs. Lipcott had not offered to take part in the funeral, because it is contrary to the practice of her coreligionists to admit the presence of women at burial ceremonies. And Leuw had not insisted on her company, because his solitariness came to him as an unspeakable relief. For once he could afford himself the luxury of giving vent to the promptings of his inmost heart. It

made him feel singularly grateful to find that he had not outgrown that greatest privilege of childhood, the privilege of tears; and, indeed, as he huddled back into the furthestmost corner of the coach, his hands to his face, he wondered if ever again he would imagine himself so vividly the little knickerbockered lad who had followed his father on the same errand—God, how long ago it all seemed!

By the time the little cemetery chapel was reached, Leuw had drilled himself back into something like his usual demeanor. Reverently he listened to the unfamiliar text of the burial service. The officiating clergyman, droning out the sentences with the apathy of stale habit, had no idea of the inspiring object-lesson by which he might have enriched his soul, had he known or cared. There stood the Jew, heart-broken and desolate at the bier of his friend, the Gentile, as though the history of mankind were unsullied by the red hand of race-hatred, by the internecine warfare of creeds, giving earnest, by mean and lowly example, that the primordial instincts of man would yet assert themselves and tread under heel the artificial distinctions between phylactery and crucifix. Here it was to be seen how Hebrew and Christian, differing from one another in all the degrees along the scale of human disparity, could become as David and Jonathan, and shame into silence the lying prophets who cried out against the millennial brotherhood of the peoples when the trespass of Cain will be redeemed in God's good time. Such object-lessons are haply to be learnt every hour of the day, if the world would but dash from its eyes the films of purblindness, which will not let it see that, just as it has made itself its own purgatory, so it can fashion itself into its own heaven.

"Thud—thud—thud," went the clods of earth on the coffin-lid, reminding Leuw of the thump of Christopher's wooden leg; but he shook off the fancy hastily. Not with such outward tokens would he associate the memory of his dear, dead friend; Christopher's memory would never require any token of sound or sight. Even long before he had died, the old man had become to Leuw a symbol, an emblematic presence, permeating his whole future and embodying itself only in worthy thought, in generous deed. And so the truest memorial he could raise to the man who was to him the largest creditor for whom his career would ever find room, was in the shape and substance of his own life. And thereby Leuw was conscious he had set himself the highest standard of action to which he could possibly reach. The effect was reciprocal, too. So long as he remembered Christopher, he would be sure of himself; and it was without any qualm of self-belief that he thought of the legend which the tombstone was to bear:

"Christopher Donaldson. Unforgettable."

"There he is, put away nice and warm, sir," said one of the grave-diggers with an expectant leer.

Leuw shook himself back into his surroundings, handed the man some silver, and walked slowly away to the railway station close by. He had told the coach not to wait for him; he dreaded the numbing influence of the cushions on his brain, which had not rested in slumber for the last two nights. He did not want to sleep; he wanted to be wide-awake; he had to be. For he was just about to put his hand on the pivot of his

life, and the question at issue was whether or not he was to give it its most decisive twist. "Let the shop die with me—you'll know what I mean." The old man had asked it as a favor. Yes, Leuw understood what he meant. So, after all, the blurred old eyes had been keen enough to sight the restlessness Leuw thought he had so skilfully kept under cover; and the favor the dead man had conditioned for himself—selfishly, as it would appear at first blush—was nothing but one last loving forethought for Leuw's own welfare. Thus Leuw construed it, and rightly from his own point of view. But for Christopher's definite injunction Leuw would have felt compelled, as a mere matter of piety, to keep within the constraint of the shop's premises. And how he would have endured that, even only for another year or two, he trembled to think of; and perhaps by the time he had, to his own satisfaction, fulfilled his tribute of obligation, his energies might have become crippled irreparably.

What, however, told most with him was that Christopher's death should have made him master of himself just at the moment when his desire to march at his own pace had almost developed into a frenzy.

As a steady background to the unwonted sensations of the last few days had stood out his recollection of the big house in St. John's Wood. Occasionally it had even come between himself and his sorrow for Christopher; he had thrust it away angrily, but it would not be denied. And he knew why. The big house represented to him the little girl who lived therein, and who—through his own doing, he admitted—had transformed herself into the criterion of his success. And measured by that rule, he had fallen

lamentably short; he had achieved nothing, or little more. Ever since his visit the other night, he had been put totally out of conceit with his present mode of "getting on." If he continued thus heaping sand-grain on sand-grain, how long would it take him to pile up a house half as big? Years and years and years; and meantime the little girl would grow up into a woman—she was doing it now—and there were other men about whose fathers had done all the grain-heaping for them, and one of them . . . Leuw clenched his fists. Christopher's last words on earth came back to him: "hurry up—hurry—hurry." At last he had found the true key-note of his life—the wheels of the jolting, stampeding train were thundering them into his soul—"hurry up—hurry—hurry." Yes, yes, he would hurry up. But not here—not here, in the weary old land, effete with the travail of bringing forth millions to her exploiters, but away in the distant wonderland, where, from all accounts, Fortune sat on a throne of gold, flinging her richest prizes to those who knew how to wheedle her into a smile. He would not wheedle her; he would stand before her, asking for the hire due to him who worked honestly with his shirt-sleeves rolled up, with no legerdemain, no trickery. . . . "Hurry up—hurry—hurry," thundered the train; "hurry up, hurry, hurry," echoed his soul.

Leuw went straight home. The shop, of course, was closed. It was to know that the senior member of the firm of Donaldson & Lipcott was dead; and that would prepare it for the more momentous changes that it was to undergo.

Lovingly Mrs. Lipcott stroked her son's cheek; the

caress seemed to put a noose about his heart that choked it. She misunderstood his silence.

"Don't grieve so," she said. "Was he ever happier than he is now? Don't grudge him it."

Leuw's voice at last forced itself passage. "Mother," he said, looking at her, "you ask me to be strong. I'm going to ask you to be strong yourself."

Mrs. Lipcott grew pale, but she smiled nevertheless. "Strong for what, Leuw?"

"To bear my going away from you."

"For long?" How pitifully the words pretended to appear steady.

"I don't know, mother. For years, perhaps, but I promise you I shall make them as few as possible."

It was Leuw who had to resume the conversation. "I'm a brute, mother; I ought not to have sprung it on you so suddenly."

"Make your mind easy on that, Leuw," replied Mrs. Lipcott; "it's no surprise for me. I was prepared."

"Prepared?" echoed Leuw, astonished.

"Yes, Leuw. I was getting too happy, and I felt I had to take some precaution—in case, you know. And your going away was the very idea I hit on for my special boggy. Every night, as I went to bed, I thought to myself: 'To-morrow Leuw may be saying good-by.' And that's why it doesn't come the least bit unexpected to me."

"You expected it, because it was the very thing you wished wouldn't turn out true," said Leuw sadly; "but in any case I did wrong. I ought at least to have paid you the compliment of asking you before I made up my mind."

"I'm glad you weren't so foolish as to play the

hypocrite to me, Leuw. What could I have answered? You would only have appeared a good son at the expense of making me out a bad mother. You know nothing would have stopped you."

"I am afraid not. I want to go. I must go. The whole world seems to be shouting at me: 'South Africa.'"

"And when do you start?"

"I don't know. I must sell the shop first; and then—the sooner I am off the sooner I shall return."

"Yes, that's true—the sooner he will return," said Mrs. Lipcott half to herself, her hands working nervously, as though to drag the distant day nearer.

"Speak up, mother," cried Leuw vehemently; "say everything you want to say, and make things as hard for me as you can. I don't deserve any better."

"All right, then—I'll take you at your word, Leuw," replied Mrs. Lipcott, smiling mistily; "I'll punish you by humbling your pride a little. I'm not a bit sorry you're going—not the least little atom, so there."

"For God's sake, mother, don't smile like that; you don't know how you're hurting me," said Leuw with a gulp.

The gulp was contagious; it developed into a sob, and the sob into something more. And then Leuw was satisfied, for his mother's tears were the sanction and the blessing without which he would not have dared to go forth on his enterprise.

The negotiations for the sale of the shop kept Leuw somewhat longer than he had anticipated. Offers came in numerously enough, but he stood hard on his bargain, not so much as a commercial deal, but be-

cause he was eager to make the best provision possible for his mother. After two weeks he succeeded in obtaining his figure; the same morning he went and booked his passage on the steamer leaving the following Saturday.

The sale of the shop-fixtures, stock, and good-will, realized for Leuw two hundred and fifty pounds. In addition to this there was the eighty odd pounds he had saved up in the bank. Of Christopher's private belongings in the way of furniture Leuw only reserved for himself the arm-chair and the tools with which the old man had worked; the rest was mere lumber, fit at best for firewood. But Christopher had left behind something more valuable, an investment producing forty pounds annually. He had made this over to Leuw already during his lifetime, about a year ago, when the first of his subsequent attacks had warned him of the beginning of the end. Leuw had taken it, and had spent every penny of the first yearly payment, and something more from his own account, in defraying the expenses of the medical attendance and nourishment which Christopher would otherwise have grudged himself.

The income of the investment Leuw, of course, set aside for his mother; it would pay comfortably for the rent of the house. Leuw would not hear of Mrs. Lipcott's suggestion to give it up and remove into lodgings; he knew how dear the new *ménage* had become to her heart, and what a wrench it would be to her to resign it. Of the three hundred and thirty-five pounds derived from the shop and his savings, he apportioned to her two hundred, which ought to maintain her easily for the next two years. And if by the

time she had reached the end of her resources Leuw was unable to—but there was no question of that. It never struck Mrs. Lipcott that Leuw was putting her to the risk of a serious speculation; and Leuw himself could desire no stronger guarantee for the success of his venture than the calm and utter confidence with which his mother looked forward to its issue. It was not till all his arrangements had been completed in detail that Leuw wrote to inform Phil of his intention.

"Now, mind, Phil," ended up the letter, "I particularly want you to notice this: don't interrupt yourself and come rushing up to town to see me off and all that sort of thing. It isn't necessary. What we said the night we took leave of each other at Mrs. Duveen's house will hold good, although we may be separated much longer than we then thought. I should have nothing to add to it, and I am sure you neither. Yours fraternally, Leuw."

Phil honored his brother's request, because he suspected the chief motive of it was Leuw's tension of feelings, which he was unwilling to increase by the strain of another parting; and, indeed, Phil himself felt that another parting would be something of an anti-climax. The words they had addressed to each other that evening were instinct with a significance which it would be sacrilege to cheapen by repetition. So Phil, in his reply, eschewed the emotional side of the question for the practical, and devoted his letter mainly to expressing his approval of Leuw's resolution. The one touch of sentiment in it was his assurance that, as far as he was concerned, their mother would not be allowed to forget for an instant that she had two sons.

Immediately on receipt of Phil's letter, Leuw penned a note to Mrs. Duveen asking when he might come to make his adieux. The reply came the same evening in the shape of Mrs. Duveen and Dulcie. Mrs. Lipcott was a little mystified by the apprehension to be read in Mrs. Duveen's face. Leuw saw nothing of it, but to him the questioning dismay in Dulcie's eyes was unmistakable. Was it—his heart leaped at the thought—for the reason he desired? In answer to Mrs. Duveen's questions, Leuw gave an account of the events which induced him to go abroad, of course, only the events which he could divulge without allowing an insight into the inner machinery of his motives.

Mrs. Duveen listened with a despondency which even Leuw could not help noticing. It surprised and touched him.

"And you have quite made up your mind?" she asked finally.

"Quite. Mother and I are fully agreed," replied Leuw.

Mrs. Duveen turned resolutely to Mrs. Lipcott. "Won't you show me over your house, Dinah?" she asked.

"There is absolutely nothing in it for you to see," replied Mrs. Lipcott a little disconcerted.

"Everything that is yours interests me," said Mrs. Duveen. "Come."

Then Mrs. Lipcott's woman's wit asserted itself. She took Mrs. Duveen to her bedroom.

"What do you want to tell me, Rose?" she asked.

"I thought you would catch my meaning," said Mrs. Duveen feverishly. "I want to tell you that we made no allowance for this."

"For what?"

"For Leuw's leaving you."

"But I don't see—"

"Yes, you do, only you are too large-hearted to say so. You know that Leuw's going away must make a difference in the arrangements we have come to concerning Phil."

"But you are mistaken, Rose."

"No, Dinah, I am not. You are going to be very lonely, and you surely don't think I shall be so wicked as to keep from you, for my own benefit, the one on whom you have a claim to relieve your loneliness."

Mrs. Lipcott shook her head obstinately. "And again I say you are wrong. One of my sons could never make up for the other, either in my eyes or in my heart. Each of them has his proper place there, and that he shall keep—anything else would not be fair to the other. If Phil came back to me here, it would only remind me too strongly that Leuw is away. Believe me, dear, I am not afraid of being alone; I shall have such pleasant thoughts to keep me company. And, besides, you see, there is the future."

"Which has helped many a weary soul over the present," murmured Mrs. Duveen to herself. "Dinah, one last question: Are you sure of yourself?"

"Quite."

"And you will tell me any moment you begin to have the slightest pang of doubt?"

"Yes, I shall tell you."

"Dinah," went on Mrs. Duveen eagerly, "I have a suggestion on the tip of my tongue, but I know better than to make it outright; one learns to know the

parents best through their children. But I shall hint at it. You have a home of your own; keep it. But my home is yours as often as you want to make it so. Will you remember?"

"I shall remember, Rose."

"And do more than remember, I adjure you, Dinah. Whenever I shall look at Phil, I shall think of you sitting here, hugging your thoughts to yourself. And you know how I shall feel. Promise you will be very good to me."

And Mrs. Lipcott promised gladly—for her own sake more than the other's. True, she could have her thoughts for companions whenever she chose; but could she be sure they would always look at her with smiling faces?

"Think you'll be away long?" Dulcie had started the conversation downstairs.

"Can't say at all. I dare say I'll stop there till I've made it worth my while going out."

"And won't you be afraid to live among those strange people? Ma says they're black, most of them."

"Oh, I don't mind the color. I'll pretend to myself they're all chimney-sweeps."

"Now, please, I won't be talked to like a baby. You answer me properly or not at all."

"Well, if you want to know, I am a bit afraid—not of the blacks, though. I have made up my mind to do such a tremendous lot out there, and what I'm afraid of is that I may be disappointed."

"I should be disappointed, too," slipped from Dulcie.

"What's that?" asked Leuw eagerly.

"Never mind," said Dulcie flushing. "What does Phil say about it? Is he coming to see you off?"

Leuw answered briefly, wishing all the time he had insisted on assuring himself that he had heard her aright.

"Now, you've asked me a lot of questions," he went on. "Suppose I ask you one for a change?"

"As many as you like."

"No, only one. Are you sorry I'm going away?"

"I don't know," said Dulcie, gazing past him.

"You ought to be; you've got something to do with it."

Dulcie looked blank astonishment. "I don't understand."

"You're used to softer chairs than the one you're sitting on, aren't you?"

"Yes, ours are much softer. But why don't you explain?"

"I have explained."

"You haven't. You said something about chairs."

"That's the explanation," returned Leuw doggedly. "You'll see it right enough—in a year or two, if you haven't forgotten me by then. And talking of forgetting reminds me of something," he went on in trepidation, for the main business of the evening was yet to be transacted, and their *tête-à-tête* might be interrupted any moment. "I say, do you know what this is?"

Dulcie, utterly confused by Leuw's excited manner and his rapid change of subject, stared in perplexity at the scrap of paper he held out to her.

"I am very sorry I made you hold my hand—" she read aloud, breaking off with a shamefaced laugh. "Why, that's the note I sent you after we fetched Phil. Fancy your keeping it all this time; I should never have believed I ever wrote so badly."

"If I give it back to you, will you let me have another one instead?" asked Leuw hoarsely. "Out there, you know."

"I must ask ma first," said Dulcie softly, "but I don't suppose she'll object. Of course, you'll write first."

"Let's shake hands on that."

Dulcie complied readily. "Why, yours is trembling," she said.

"Not a bit—you're only squeezing all the fright out of me," laughed Leuw buoyantly.

The laugh echoed in Leuw's heart, and shone out upon his face the whole of the two days remaining between him and his departure. His cheerfulness infected Mrs. Lipcott, and converted the trying suspense of the interval into something like joyous anticipation. The talk was not of Leuw's going, but of his coming. Leuw had a hard struggle to keep himself from blurting out to his mother the secret which he was taking with him as his most precious equipment on his enterprise. He was going to keep in touch with Dulcie; he would have access to her thoughts, he had the certainty that he would not be cast out and forgotten. He felt a sincere pity for the obstacles which would be unfortunate enough to come into his path; they were going to have a very hard time of it.

Leuw had made up his mind to pay no farewell calls; that was a courtesy which he accorded only to the dead—his father and Christopher. But chance threw him into the way of bidding good-by to at least one acquaintance—just the one whom, if he had had his choice, he would have wished to see before all others. On the Friday morning, as he was making his final purchases, he encountered Yellow Joe.

"It's all right—I'm keeping 'em up, figures and handwriting," said the latter, hastening to forestall Leuw's customary admonition.

Leuw smiled a little, but immediately became grave again. "I'm very sorry, Joe, but you'll think I've been hoaxing you. Do you know what I meant by asking you to keep them up? I knew that sooner or later I should want an assistant in my shop, and I thought I couldn't do better than have you."

"And now?" asked Joe, pale with eagerness.

"I haven't got a shop any more. I've given it up. To-morrow I leave for South Africa."

"Yes, but you're coming back, aren't you?"

"Please God, I am."

"Well, then, I'll wait for you, if you don't mind. You're the safest card to bet on that I know of."

"Thank you, Joe. But in the meantime you'll have a try yourself, of course."

"I shan't get rusty. I've got to keep myself in good working trim for you, haven't I?"

The steamer would not leave till Saturday about midday, but Leuw was to start off from London that afternoon, so as not to profane the Sabbath by the train-journey to Southampton. Mrs. Lipcott wished it so.

"Keep God's Law as long as you can," she said, "afterward you must deal with Him your own way."

"I have thought of that already," said Leuw. "But I don't mind dealing with God. He allows liberal discount."

Mrs. Lipcott had some little difficulty in obtaining Leuw's consent to accompany him to Waterloo Station; but for the first time since many years she mustered up firmness enough to make her will prevail.

"Are you afraid I'll make a scene?" she asked reproachfully.

"I want to spare your feelings, that's all; people will be looking," replied Leuw.

The cab was at the door. Leuw arose from the meal he had been trying in vain to do justice to, and looked round him leisurely.

"I don't think I've forgotten anything," he said with as much composure as if he expected to be back that evening.

Mrs. Lipcott was true to her word. She did not make a scene.

"Mother," said Leuw, as the third signal bell went.

"My son—my son," murmured Mrs. Lipcott. A burning kiss, and that was all.

"What would you like best to-night?" Leuw had asked his mother as they sat in the cab.

"A message from you," she had replied.

"You shall have it," Leuw had promised her; "it will be home before you."

And when Mrs. Lipcott got back, and was about to transfer the silver candlesticks from the mantle-piece to the table, she found beneath them the letter Leuw

had written the night before, and had hidden where she was most likely to find it. He said but little; still that little was a good deal more than his somewhat niggardly tongue could ever have got itself to dispense of his heart's overflow. And as Mrs. Lipcott read, the two candle-lights gloried out, through the blur over her eyes, into a score of stately, flaming aureoles.